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HORATIO NELSON

Frontispiece

SAILORMEN ALL
by Vice-Admiral **GORDON**
CAMPBELL, V.C., D.S.O., M.P.

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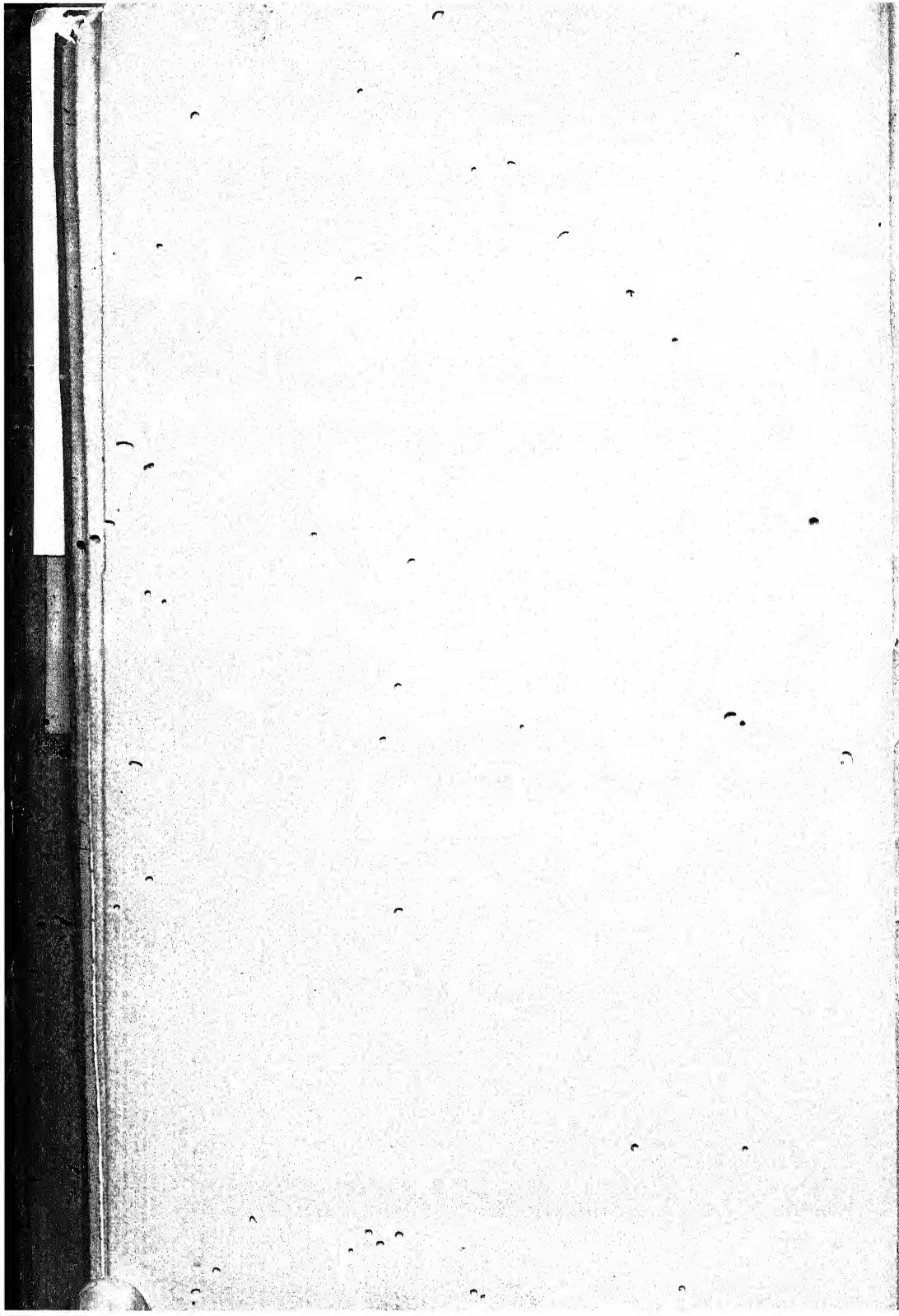
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TO MY SON
FREDERICK DAVID GORDON

"It is on the Navy, under the good Providence
of God, the wealth, safety, and strength of
the Kingdom chiefly depend."



FOREWORD

IN spite of the fact that the general desire of the world is to avert further wars, and that I myself am a member of the League of Nations Union, I claim that the retelling of stories concerning many wars can do nothing to impede the progress of humanity towards universal peace. To glorify war would be a difficult task, even had I the desire to do so, but my purpose is to study the characters of the men who have helped to make the British Empire what it is—the greatest bulwark for peace in the world.

During my lecture tours in this country, I have met many people who have expressed a wish to know more about the Navy. It is true that there are many naval histories, but nearly all are too technical for the general reader or deal at great length with one particular war or phase of war. The excellent works of such writers as J. R. Hale, Bartimeus, Commander Dorling, D.S.O., R.N. ("Taffrail") and Keble Chatterton are eagerly read by the general public, and it is my hope that this volume may appeal to the same type of reader. I have attempted to make each chapter a story in itself and, where possible, to draw some comparisons between the old Navy and the new. The greatest difficulty has been the

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selection of the stories to be told, as history teems with stirring adventures and gallant deeds. Indeed, if I were to start the book afresh, I might make an entirely different selection, so abundant is the material available.

This book is not intended to be a work of historical reference, but I have consulted many authorities in my endeavour to render the stories as accurately as possible—not too easy a task when the authorities themselves often differ. That well known historians often do differ is not altogether surprising, for despatches have at times been written twice, one account for publication and another for confidential information; it is doubtful, too, whether all the facts of the last war have been or ever will be published. In an action it is impossible for every incident to be known to the Admiral or Captain in command at the time he sends in his report, or indeed for a long time after, and it has always been the custom of the Navy to make reports as brief as possible. I frequently meet old shipmates, who tell me details of events which took place in the various ships I commanded, which I have never heard before. Perhaps because, had they told me before it might have got someone into trouble, or more often than not, because it has been thought that “the Skipper had better not be told.”

I have attempted in the stories I relate to give some idea of what the feelings of those who took part must have been. I have often wondered, for instance, what the feelings of the officers and men

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of the Grand Fleet must have been on the night after the Battle of Jutland. Was it disappointment, or were they looking forward to the morn in the hope of seeing the German Fleet again? Who can say?—Unless the participants voice their thoughts, which they rarely do.

Many of the stories related in this book have been told before, and will bear repeating many times over. No book of this sort, for example, would be complete unless Nelson figured in it, though I have tried for the most part to confine myself to individual actions, which always appeal to me most and which bring out the spirit of adventure, self-sacrifice, self-control and courage, all of which are necessary in peace time as in war, though the latter may offer more opportunities of displaying such qualities. In point of fact, in peace time it is harder to be brave or to give something (say your private property) to the country, than it is in war time to sacrifice your life, because in the first place in war time if someone is trying to kill you, the law of self-preservation makes you try and kill him, and in war time also a patriotic fervour runs through a country rendering it easier to be courageous.

In Nelson's action at Teneriffe, which is described in the first chapter, you see many sides of his great character. His optimism and his pessimism, his personal leadership and courage, and also his *flair* for comforting the weaker sex.

Grenville's famous action in the *Revenge* is told again, and I have followed it by a similar gallant

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fight which happened at the Battle of Jutland over three hundred years after.

The same unyielding resolution inspired Grenville in the *Revenge* and Loftus Jones in the *Shark*, and much the same thoughts must have passed through their minds in those great culminating moments of their lives. Again, in the cases of the two ships called *Mary Rose*, we see the captains imbued with the same spirit and anxiety to save the ships under their charge, regardless of the consequences to themselves; the fact that one succeeded and the other did not is merely incidental. The actions of the *Monmouth* in 1758 and the *Monmouth* of 1914 bear a close resemblance, as both ships were attempting to damage a superior foe in order to bring about its eventual destruction.

The Mystery or "Q" ship idea is as old as the hills, and no doubt during the late war those who commanded these vessels were unwittingly using much the same ideas as had been used by our forefathers.

No book of this sort would be complete without some reference to the Merchant Navy, which has always played such a large part in our wars, and I have found it difficult to know which of the many heroic fights to select. A whole volume could easily be filled with them. I am indebted to the Record Department of His Majesty's India Office for allowing me to make use of the original log of the East Indiaman ship *Marlborough*, in which Captain Matthew Martin made such an interesting and courageous escape from three French men-of-war.

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Frigate actions were common in the old wars, but the hand to hand fighting that took place then is no longer possible. The action of the *Shannon* and *Chesapeake* has been written and rewritten, yet the story remains as fresh as it is thrilling. The Captain of the *Shannon* was Captain Broke, which at once led my thoughts to H.M.S. *Broke*, which fought a night action in the Straits of Dover during the Great War—an action which brought with it the nearest approach to old-time boarding that I know of.

Showing why a sailor is called a handy man, I have included some of his shore exploits and cutting out expeditions. Many of those I have written are deeds of the past, yet the story of the submarine *Eri* makes as good reading as any cutting out expedition. I have also included a sample of the sort of shore expeditions the Navy has taken part in from time to time in every corner of the world, and I think it will be conceded that the title "handy man" is not a misnomer.

Having begun the book with Nelson and his fight on the Mole, I could not resist the temptation to conclude with another fight on a Mole, at Zeebrugge, when Admiral of the Fleet, Sir Roger Keyes, G.C.B., etc. etc., a veritable Nelson of to-day, was in supreme command.

I attach a list of some of the works I have consulted, and must record my indebtedness to my wife, and my secretary, Miss Gwen Cumming, for the assistance they have given me in compiling this book, when, owing to Parliamentary and

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other duties, I have been unable to consult all the records myself. I am also indebted to the Curator and Mr. H. Foster of the Imperial War Museum, the Secretary of the Navy League, Rear-Admiral G. O. Stephenson, C.B., C.M.G., for their kind assistance, and for the help I have received in obtaining copies of old prints and paintings which I have acknowledged in the appropriate places.

I need make no apology for opening the book with that fine poem, "Ye Mariners of England." It was written by one of my kinsmen.

GORDON CAMPBELL.

July 7th, 1933.

"YE MARINERS OF ENGLAND"

By THOMAS CAMPBELL

Ye Mariners of England
That guard our native seas,
Whose flag has braved, a thousand years,
The battle and the breeze,
Your glorious standard launch again
To match another foe :
And sweep through the deep,
While the stormy winds do blow ;
While the battle rages loud and long
And the stormy winds do blow.

The spirits of your fathers
Shall start from every wave—
For the deck it was their field of fame,
And Ocean was their grave.
Where Blake and mighty Nelson fell
Your manly hearts shall glow,
As ye sweep through the deep,
While the stormy winds do blow :
While the battle rages loud and long
And the stormy winds do blow.

Britannia needs no bulwarks,
No towers along the steep ;
Her march is o'er the mountain waves,
Her home is on the deep.
With thunders from her native oak
She quells the floods below—
As they roar on the shore,
When the stormy winds do blow ;
When the battle rages loud and long,
And the stormy winds do blow.

The meteor flag of England
Shall yet terrific burn ;
Till danger's troubled night depart
And the star of peace return.
Then, then, ye ocean warriors !
Our song and feast shall flow
To the fame of your name,
When the storm has ceased to blow ;
When the fiery fight is heard no more
And the storm has ceased to blow.



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CHAPTER I

A MOLE

1798

"England expects every man to do his duty."

EVERY man, woman and child who passes through London sees the great monument in Trafalgar Square, with Nelson at the top straining his eyes for a glimpse of the sea, whereon lay his fame.

Nelson, the man who won the Battle of Trafalgar, Britain's most famous naval fight, when the then monster ships of the line were engaged in deadly combat, the enemy was routed and defeated, and Nelson—England's hero—was mortally wounded. Some are content to leave it at that, but one must read the life of Nelson to gauge the spirit which lay inside his feeble frame. Not only was he the hero of Trafalgar, the Nile and Copenhagen, but if we turn to some of his lesser actions, we find in each one a spirit of daring and personal bravery rarely if ever equalled by any other sailor. Had he lived in present times his chest would not have been wide enough to hold all the decorations he would have earned.

Nelson joined the Navy at the very early age of twelve, and when but fifteen took part in an

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expedition towards the North Pole, and when his ship got stuck in the ice, volunteered for and obtained command of a four-oared cutter with twelve men to set off and break a channel through the ice. So even as a youngster he had a spirit of daring and loved the scent of danger. Then, as a very young and junior lieutenant, he caught the eye of his seniors by again showing his daring in taking charge of a boarding party when the First Lieutenant of his ship had failed, and when the Captain had said, almost contemptuously, "Have I no officer in the ship who can board the prize?"

And so throughout his life he was always to the fore, whether in boarding, chasing or blockading the enemy, fighting on land, as at Corsica, where he lost his eye, commanding in great naval battles, or in cutting out expeditions such as at Teneriffe.

Many good stories could be written about "cutting out" expeditions; history teems with these daring adventures when ships' boats, fire boats, or even frigates themselves would boldly go into the enemy's harbours, generally under cover of darkness, to capture, or as it was called "cut out," some enemy ship.

Teneriffe had been the scene of more than one cutting out expedition, for it was here that Hardy, one day to become famous as Nelson's flag captain, cut out in broad daylight a small French corvette of fourteen guns. Hardy, then a lieutenant, was in charge of boats from two British frigates, the *Lively* and *Minerva*. In spite of a heavy fire which wounded many of his men, Hardy pressed his

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attack to a complete success, receiving as his reward promotion to Commander. Perhaps it was his success that put into the mind of Admiral Lord St. Vincent another attack.

During July of 1797, Lord St. Vincent, who had recently received his peerage after the battle off St. Vincent, was cruising with the British Fleet off Cadiz, with the hopes of enticing out the Spanish Fleet. While so employed he got news of a rich Spanish galleon being at Santa Cruz, Teneriffe, on her way from Manila.

St. Vincent decided to send a squadron of his ships to try and cut out and capture her. He selected Rear-Admiral Nelson, K.B., for the job. St. Vincent knew the job would be a difficult one, and naturally chose the man who would be most likely to do it if anyone could. Nelson was then aged thirty-nine, and had already greatly distinguished himself in many battles. His record included engagements with the enemy on over one hundred occasions, and he had assisted in the capture of seven sail of the line, six frigates and many merchant vessels.

He was duly detached from St. Vincent's fleet and took with him a small squadron consisting of the *Theseus*, *Culloden*, and *Zealous*—all 74-gun ships—the *Leander* of 50 guns, and three frigates, the *Seahorse*, *Emerald* and *Terpsichore*—of about 30 guns. In addition to these he had the cutter *Fox*, a small ship of only 10 guns, and also a mortar boat. The *Leander* did not actually join the squadron till some days later.

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In order to capture the Spanish ship he intended first to seize Santa Cruz. Nelson had already had much experience of shore fighting with soldiers, particularly in Corsica.

Taking Santa Cruz was really a job for soldiers, but these could not be obtained, and so Nelson had to content himself with his own seamen and an additional party of marines, specially embarked before he left the Fleet. He was full of hope and his spirits ran high. With his usual manner of thinking of nothing but finishing the job off speedily, he said he thought about ten hours would do it, and that with Troubridge ashore and himself afloat, he was confident of success.

On the way across every detail was carefully arranged to ensure success, and a landing party of about a thousand seamen and marines, under the command of Captain Troubridge, with Captain Oldfield in command of the marines, was organised. These parties were transferred by boat to the frigates as soon as the squadron arrived within sight of the peak of Teneriffe, which was on July 20th. Nelson kept his big ships out of sight and sent inshore the *Seahorse*, *Emerald*, *Terpsichore* and *Fox*, towards the north-east of the town. The idea was that such small ships, if seen, would not create any great alarm, and that during the night they could close the land, send the landing parties (which had been transferred from the larger ships) ashore, and seize from the rear the fort which overlooked Santa Cruz.

Surprise and dash were necessary. Neither was

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forthcoming, as although the squadron was only three miles off the land at midnight, yet, owing to the adverse winds and currents, when dawn broke they were no nearer than a mile off land and no men had yet been landed. The chance of surprise had gone, as by this time, in accordance with pre-arranged plans, Nelson had arrived in sight of the town with his big ships.

Knowing something of Nelson's temperament, one can well imagine him pacing up and down his poop, telescope under arm, and wishing he had taken on the job himself.

Troubridge and Oldfield went on board the *Theseus* to report to Nelson and discuss the situation with him. He did not know what strength or fortifications the enemy had ashore—in these days aircraft would have carried out a reconnaissance, but Nelson had no such powers, and such information as he had turned out later to be false. In the meantime Nelson did not intend to give in without an attempt, and about nine o'clock he ordered the frigates to close again and land their parties, and he himself tried to support them with fire from his big ships. Both schemes were unsuccessful, as the landing parties found the heights ashore fortified with forty guns and strongly held, whilst Nelson, who had intended to take his ships close inshore, and if practicable anchor there and then carry out a bombardment to cover the landing party and batter the fort, found that the wind was too strong to get close in, and the nearest he could get was in too deep water for anchoring.

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The men under Troubridge were obliged by the force of the resistance to retire and re-embark in the frigates. In the meantime, Nelson stood out to sea again and the frigates followed, but it was a day or two before the weather was suitable for transferring the landing parties back to their proper ships.

Nelson's plan had failed through no fault of his. Had he been on the spot in command of the frigates himself, a different tale might have been told, for it was pretty certain that Nelson would have landed earlier and had a good scrap, and even if he had found the fortifications stronger than he anticipated, would either have taken them, or, to use his own words, "been in a confounded scrape"—but Nelson was not an ordinary man, and was ready to take more responsibility on his shoulders than the average officer. He was not a man to accept defeat easily, nor was he a man to tell others to go where he feared to go himself. He planned another attempt, and this time he decided to take personal command of the landing parties, though by doing so he knew he would be open to severe criticism and possible censure, as it was hardly the job of a Rear-Admiral* commanding a squadron to leave his command and go ashore with a landing party. In fact, he had been instructed not to land in person. But Nelson cared nothing for regulations or etiquette of that sort; his only aim was to destroy the enemy and achieve his object, and

* We shall see at a later date how another Rear-Admiral in command went ashore with his sailors for a fight.

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if that included disobeying orders he was always ready to answer for his conduct.

He was a man who had many forebodings of the future and in modern days would be called "psychic." He knew this new attempt of his, to be made after the enemy had full knowledge of his presence, was bound to be accompanied by a great deal of risk, and in one of the last letters he ever wrote with his right hand he said to his Commander-in-Chief: "I shall not enter on the subject why we are not in possession of Santa Cruz. This night I, humble as I am, command the whole, and to-morrow my head will probably be crowned either with laurel or cypress." Nelson never expected to return, which makes his conduct of the expedition all the more praiseworthy, as we will see how he controlled his own personal feelings in order to give further inspiration to his men, although he knew this attack was what might be called a do-or-die attempt.

Towards dusk on July 24th he took his whole squadron inshore and anchored to the north-east of the town, the scene of the original landing. There was little chance now of effecting a surprise, as the enemy were on the alert, but by anchoring off the north-east fort Nelson tried to attain what little chance of that advantage was left by inducing the enemy to expect the landing at this place, whilst in reality he intended to make a direct attack on the town.

After anchoring, Nelson went to have supper on board the *Seahorse*, whose Captain—Fremantle—

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had his newly-wed wife on board with him. How strange this sounds in modern days—wives on board and supper parties before action, within a few miles of the enemy! Such a thing would now be impossible—wives are not allowed on board by the law of the Admiralty, and ships are not allowed to anchor off the enemy coast by the unwritten law of the modern gun and the lurking submarine.

Nelson never did anything without some object in view. Knowing this attack was more or less a forlorn hope, yet he felt that the failure up to date would bring discredit on his country, which he loved so dearly, and also on himself and his squadron.

With a tender heart for the (then) weaker sex, he went on board the *Seahorse*, thus showing his outward calm.

The night was a dark and stormy one with a rough sea—the darkness of course was an advantage, but the rough sea made the boat-work extra hazardous. Nelson had again organised a “landing party” of roughly 1,000 men, of whom 700 were to go in the open rowing boats of the squadron, 180 in the little *Fox*, and 75 in a provision boat which he had recently captured. In spite of the weather Nelson decided at 11 p.m. to go ahead with his plans, and gave the order for the marines and seamen to embark. With the boats banging against the ships’ sides and being tossed to and fro by the heavy sea, the embarkation occupied some time, the difficulties being increased by the fact

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that great care had to be taken to do everything as quietly as possible.

As soon as the embarkation was complete, Nelson, in personal command, gave the order to "shove off," and headed straight for the Mole, which formed part of the harbour of Santa Cruz.

In Nelson's boat was his stepson, young Nisbet. Nisbet was only a very young officer, and when he volunteered to join in the landing party, Nelson tried to persuade him not to do so—evidently his humane and sentimental feelings again ran away with him. He tenderly advised young Nisbet to stay on board, pointing out that he should remain in charge of the *Theseus*, no doubt as an attraction and recompense for not joining with the party; but he rather gave himself away when he added that it would "avoid having two deaths in one family on the same night," to which Nisbet very promptly replied: "Sir, the ship must take care of herself. I will go with you to-night if I never go again."

Heavily laden as they were with men and their equipment, and with no such help as was given by steamboats in that other great landing—the Dardanelles—the boats had a great struggle pulling ashore, and could make but slow headway in the heavy sea. The weather, to some extent, was in their favour, as they were able to get within half a gunshot of the shore before they were perceived by the Spaniards, but so slow had been the passage that it was 1.30 a.m. on the 25th before they got there

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Nelson must have been well aware of the fact that the unsuccessful landing and the adverse winds which had delayed him would have given the enemy time to reorganise and strengthen the defences, and that there were probably sentries double posted all round the shore. It was lucky therefore that the landing party had been able to get as close as they had, but as soon as the look-outs on shore sighted the attacking party the alarm was given and the bells of the city disturbed the slumbering inhabitants by their loud clatter, which could be heard even by the men in the boats.

Immediately a heavy fire was opened on them. The sailors led by Nelson replied with loud huzzas and gave an extra hard pull on the oars. There was a bit of a surf breaking, and the boats, battered about by the seas, soon got separated, but Nelson in his boat pushed straight on in spite of the fire, and all the other boats in one direction or another did likewise.

Nelson, together with several other boats, reached the Mole, where 500 men were waiting to receive them. He at once drew his sword and was leaping on to the Mole when a grape shot struck him in the right shoulder; he quickly shifted his sword to his left hand—and he would have gone on, but he was overcome with faintness and fell back into the arms of Nisbet, who quickly took his silk handkerchief from his neck and tied it round the Admiral's arm to stop the bleeding.

The boat from which Nelson had stepped was aground, but a few seamen were gathered round to

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get it afloat and he was placed tenderly at the bottom of the boat. Pulling himself together, however, he insisted on knowing what was going on, but there was little to be seen except the flashes of the guns.

In the meantime a desperate struggle was taking place on the Mole. The boats of Captain Fremantle and Captain Bowen of the *Terpsichore* were amongst the first to get up close to the Mole, and Captain Bowen's boat was sunk by a shot from the forts, seven men being drowned, but the remainder scrambled ashore. The Mole head was defended, in addition to the large number of men referred to, armed with muskets, swords and pikes, by six 24-pounders, but in spite of this several of the boats' crews got ashore and stormed the Mole, the survivors dashing in through musketry fire and grape shot, while their comrades were being killed and wounded all around them. A terrible hand-to-hand fight took place in the darkness, and it was difficult to tell friend from foe except by the language used.

After gaining the end of the Mole they fought on and succeeded in capturing or spiking all the guns, but the fire was now so intense and they were suffering so many casualties that they were unable to get any farther.

Captain Bowen, who had safely got ashore in spite of his boat having been sunk, was slain as he advanced along the Mole with his sailors. Fremantle was also wounded and had to stagger back to the boats.

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Unfortunately the landing-party on the Mole was not as large as had been arranged, as owing to the darkness and the heavy seas many of the boats never reached their destination. Some were driven back altogether; one division under Captains Hood and Millar by skilful handling succeeded, after being buffeted about by the seas, in effecting a landing to the south-west of the town, where the beach was very rocky and many of the boats were badly damaged; another, under Captain Troubridge—who had been in command at the original failure—got ashore to the southward of the town, also amongst many rocks and close under a battery. Landing amongst the rocks was as dangerous and incurred almost as many casualties as facing the musketry fire, as many of the men had to wade ashore, and in addition to this, much of the ammunition got wet and became useless.

Whilst the boats were getting ashore as best they could, the *Fox* was being subjected to heavy fire and several shots hit her, and then, unfortunately, she was struck by a large shot. An ear-splitting shriek was heard as she quickly filled, and sank almost at once with a loss of about a hundred lives.

Nelson, though suffering agonies from his wound which was bleeding profusely, refused to be taken back to his ship till every endeavour had been made to save the drowning men from the *Fox* and other boats, and so instead of going straight back to his ship, the crew pulled about as best they

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could in the stormy sea trying to save life. But in the dark night and choppy sea their gallant efforts were of little avail."

Luckily the news of Nelson's wound was not generally known, so that his spirit was still present in the attackers to go on, as they knew he would not turn back. The men under Troubridge, though only a small party of men, pushed on and eventually reached the Town Square, expecting to find Nelson there. They were much surprised and disappointed not to find him, but, spurred on by the thought that he had personally led the attack, they decided to take the Citadel. Troubridge ordered a roll call to be taken and found that he had less than three hundred men; but with great boldness (for he had only this handful of men compared with the Spaniards' eight thousand) he sent a sergeant of marines with a summons to the Governor of the town to surrender. No doubt the Governor thought this a bit of impertinence or perhaps a trap, and no reply was at first sent. Troubridge thought that perhaps the sergeant had been shot, and after waiting some time he decided to attempt to capture the Citadel.

It was now, though still dark, getting towards daylight. Troubridge had no scaling ladders, as these had been lost at the landing, and he had only some ammunition which had been captured from the Spaniards, as nearly all his own was useless after its wetting.

In the meantime the landing-parties under Hood and Millar had struggled through the darkness and

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joined up, but even, now Troubridge had less than four hundred men. With great boldness, and although many of their arms were damaged or useless, he advanced to the attack. Once more it was a hand-to-hand fight in the dark, the flash from the muskets being the only light given, but advance soon became impossible owing to the greatly superior force against him, and Troubridge had to order "Halt!" He was now in a tight corner, with no hope of advance and little of retreat, for his ammunition and provisions were spent and his boats had been too damaged at the landing to be serviceable for re-embarking, though there might be some at the Mole.

No one can detract from the great courage shown by Troubridge on this occasion, but somehow there is a feeling that if Nelson in person had been there, things might have been different. But then there was and is only one Nelson. But Troubridge rose to the occasion and with what was a grand bit of cheek, sent Hood under a flag of truce to the Governor saying that if the Spaniards advanced he would burn the town down; at the same time he offered to capitulate on condition that he and his men were allowed to return to their ships with their arms and with a promise not to renew the attack.

The Spanish Governor, Don Juan Gutierrez, with great chivalry not only accepted the terms, but also received the British wounded into his hospitals and, further, provided the party with wine and food. As part of the terms Troubridge

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with his men marched down to the beach with their colours flying, prisoners were exchanged, and the Spaniards returned the boats they had captured.

The town had not been taken, but the gallantry of the attack and fighting, inspired by Nelson, was superb and is best realised by the graciousness of the treatment given the attackers, who had 6 officers and 37 men killed, 97 drowned, 105 wounded and 5 missing—a total of about 25 per cent. of the force sent in to the attack.

Nelson himself had reached his ship, the *Theseus*, about 2 a.m. with his arm dangling at his side. Something like consternation took place on board when it was seen that Nelson was in the returning boat, and the officers at once made arrangements to hoist him on to the *Theseus*, but he refused assistance and asked for a line to be thrown to him; this he twisted round his left arm and hauled himself on board, because as he said, "Let me alone. I have yet my legs left and one arm." With a spirit undaunted he calmly ordered the surgeon to get his instruments ready. Operations in those days were not the simple, more or less painless things of to-day. His arm was amputated in a way that left him in great pain for a very long time to come, but those who read of his further activities will know that it took more even than this to damp his spirit. In fact, almost immediately after his arm had been amputated he wrote out his official dispatch and also a letter to Lady Nelson in which he said, "I know it will add much to your pleasure in finding that your

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son, Josiah, under God's providence, was instrumental in saving my life."

Nelson had to admit it was no use attacking again, and with a sore heart, apart from his physical suffering, he withdrew his squadron from Teneriffe a few days after this unsuccessful but glorious attack—not, however, before, thanks to the courtesy of the Spanish Governor, he had obtained fresh provisions and other necessaries for his squadron.

On his return to England he was received by the King, who expressed sorrow at the loss of his arm and his impaired health, to which Nelson replied with dignified loyalty, "May it please Your Majesty, I can never think that a loss, which the performance of my duty has occasioned; and as long as I have a foot to stand on I will combat for my King and Country."

When his health was restored, he sent a message to the minister of St. George's, Hanover Square, saying: "An officer desires to return thanks to Almighty God for his perfect recovery from a severe wound, and also for the many mercies bestowed on him."

CHAPTER II

"SINK ME" THE SHIP, MASTER GUNNER "

I

"REVENGE, 1591 "

And the sun went down, and the stars came out far over the summer
sea,

But never a moment ceased the fight of the one and the fifty-three,
Ship after ship, the whole night long, their high-built galleons came,
Ship after ship, the whole night long, with her battle-thunder and
flame ;

Ship after ship, the whole night long, drew back with her dead
and her shame.

For some were sunk, and many were shatter'd, and so could fight
us no more—

God of battles, was ever a battle like this in the world before ?

—From Tennyson's poem.

SIR RICHARD GRENVILLE came of an old Cornish family and, like Drake and so many others of his time, was not only a sailor but a politician, and took a keen interest in the West Country affairs. He was elected to represent the County of Cornwall in 1571, and summoned to meet in the Parliament at Westminster. He was again elected in 1584, and in addition to these honours he was almost made Sheriff of the County.

But he was a seaman born and had taken part in many voyages which had made his name famous and feared. Like many of the seaman of his time.

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and, as a matter of fact, since, he was unable to "sit still" and when prevented from pursuing sea ambitions, did the next best thing he thought would be of use to his country. Politics or farming have frequently been the antidotes to a life at sea. Grenville was much, as can be read, associated with the history of the Elizabethan times, for he sailed with Sir Walter Raleigh in his second great voyage of exploration, and also he commanded the *Revenge*, a ship which distinguished herself not only at the time of the Great Armada, but more especially when Grenville commanded her at a later date.

Grenville had that almost swaggering courage which was a feature of the Elizabethan period, at a time when knighthoods were given for chivalry, and he was the type of man who would disdain to do anything that could possibly savour of cowardice.

In August, 1591, during one of our all too frequent wars with Spain, Admiral Lord Howard was lying with a small squadron of some ten ships in Flores Bay, Azores. Grenville, then a Vice-Admiral, was second-in-command and had his flag flying in the *Revenge*.

The *Revenge* was a little ship of some 500 tons and was already fifteen years old, but she was a ship which was well known in the West Country and especially at Plymouth, as she had always been commanded by men who became famous in their country's history—Drake himself had once flown his flag in her, and her old timbers had shivered at the call of "Drake's Drum."

“Sink Me the Ship, Master Gunner”

Howard had in his squadron many other ships with famous names, such as the *Defiance*, *Bona-venture*, *Lion*, *Foresight* and *Crane*. His task was to try and intercept Spanish ships from the West Indies, and as good a base to work from as any was the Azores, where for many months he waited for the Spanish treasure ships. It was not known at that time that the King of Spain had sent a large fleet to safeguard his rich galleons on their voyage overseas.

During his long wait Howard had great difficulty in maintaining the health of his crews. The food in those days could not be preserved in the way it can now, and bad food, together with impure water, is generally accompanied by scurvy—a terrible disease, which quickly renders men, otherwise physically fit, quite as useless as carcasses. Being anchored close to the shore, Howard was able to land his sick men as occasion offered, but at the same time he knew that he always ran the risk of leaving them there should he wish suddenly to take his fleet to sea. Still, men with scurvy were, from a fighting point of view, of very little use on board, and Howard, by landing them, ensured not only that they had the best treatment possible, but that he would get them back again fit and well.

There is little doubt that the long wait at the Azores had begun to make the English Fleet a bit pessimistic of the Spanish treasure ships ever arriving. But, by means which I have been unable to ascertain, the Spanish Admiral had got

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news of the presence of Admiral Howard's fleet off the Azores. The memory of the Armada cannot have been a very pleasant one to the Spaniards at that time, and the Spanish Admiral—Don Alonso—decided to take what appeared to be a favourable opportunity of getting even with some of the English seamen who had caused them so much trouble.

Don Alonso had his flag flying in a very fine ship of the line called the *St. Philip*, a ship of 1,500 tons and no less than 78 guns—a very big ship for those days. With a fleet of no less than 53 vessels in all, he sailed for the Azores after Howard—but by a stroke of luck the English had also got information of the Spaniard's intentions, though rather too late, as on August 31st the *Moonshine*, a small sailing vessel, arrived at the Azores from Cadiz to warn Howard of the approaching danger. The *Moonshine* only arrived in time to give Howard a short S O S message, for hardly had he got this when the Spanish Fleet hove in sight, with the great *St. Philip* herself towering out of the water more conspicuous than any of the other ships.

Howard's first thoughts naturally turned to the men of his fleet who were sick ashore; although they might not be in a fit state to fight, he hadn't the heart to leave them there. On the other hand, he could not endanger his whole fleet and he therefore ordered his fleet to make all sail, leaving behind the *Revenge*, the fastest ship of the squadron, and a small transport, to recover the men. Trans-

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port sounds a big name, but it was the size of the average "pleasure yacht" from a seaside resort.

From what we know of Grenville's character, there is little doubt that he rather enjoyed being left "on his own." In fact, some reports say he deliberately stayed behind rather than appear to be escaping from the Spaniards. If he had had a blind eye perhaps he would have put his telescope to it as Nelson did at Copenhagen. In any case, he was not perturbed when Howard stood to sea—or even when he found the Spanish Fleet between him and the rest of his own fleet. He waited whilst his boats pulled to and fro between the ship and the shore embarking his men, and when he eventually sailed, although he could easily have rejoined Howard by sailing to leeward of the Spaniards—as the small transport actually did—he disdained to do so. His sailing master advised a similar course to the one the transport had taken, but Grenville flatly refused to follow such advice. How could he? Born a West Countryman and a loyal subject of the Queen, it was against his pride to do so. To pass to leeward of a ship is to admit that the other is superior. Such an acknowledgment was beneath the dignity of such a chivalrous man as Grenville, and with contempt he told his officers that he would rather die than have such a mark of dishonour on himself, his country, and the Queen's ship.

With a rashness which one cannot but admire, Grenville attempted to pass straight between the Spanish lines. Calling his crew aft, he had quickly

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told them what he intended to do, and in a spirit of bravado made light of the matter. Some of the Spaniards, so taken aback at this effrontery, actually made way for him—how tickled Grenville must have been at seeing the great Spanish ships of the line taking an attitude like pompous old dowagers bowing to a debutante ! But for all his rashness and pigheadedness, Grenville must have realised that he, with his puny little ship, was attacking the fleet of fifty-three vessels.

It was three in the afternoon when the fight began.

The *St. Philip*—with her great show of canvas—bore down on the little *Revenge* from windward and took the wind out of the latter's sails. Other vessels soon joined the *St. Philip*, but although the wind had been taken out of the *Revenge's* sails, so that she was unable to make any headway, yet Grenville had no thoughts of surrender, and with a touch of disdain combined with his pride he was prepared to take them all on. He had two advantages, and he made use of them. One was that the Spanish gunnery was bad, and the other was that the Spanish ships were so much higher out of the water that they found it hard to get their guns on to the *Revenge*.

Against this it must be remembered that Grenville had many sick men on board, who were of no use for fighting.

No sooner had the action commenced than Grenville was wounded—as unfortunately so frequently happened to the commanders in many of the actions I relate—but this (as also frequently

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happened) did not deter him from going on with his great fight.

The Spaniards came ship after ship to attack him—they laughed at his little vessel with a crew of some 150 men, whilst they had 5,000 or more. In fact the Spanish ships were crowded with troops in addition to their normal complement of seamen. Grenville never wavered. He must often have thought to himself of the old saying that “He who laughs last laughs longest.” Sometimes attacked by as many as five ships at a time, Grenville engaged them all. The fight was “hot and close”—that is the usual way of describing naval actions. This was something more, this was a case of an individual man challenging the might of Spain. He may or may not have realised his case was hopeless, but what cared he? With a courage that has never been equalled he engaged ship after ship as they came down upon him. No sooner did he beat one off than another took its place, and all the time the crew of the *Revenge* were loading and firing their guns and as it were “digging these giants in the ribs.” It was not as if the *Revenge* was only engaged on one side, but she was engaged on both sides at the same time, and each new Spaniard that came down had a fresh crew and cool guns, whereas the *Revenge’s* crew were getting fewer and fewer all the time and their strength was being sapped out of them—yet inspired by Grenville they continued on, ever on, and when the Spaniards attempted to board, Grenville was ever at their head with drawn sword

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to drive them back—his crew behind him with their muskets and pikes. There were occasional lulls between the time one ship was driven off and another took her place, which enabled the crew to get a breather and to give such little first aid to their wounds as was available in those days ; but Grenville intended to fight his way through and he scoffed at the overwhelming strength of the enemy. One of his small transports which was attached to the Fleet, seeing the difficulties the *Revenge* was in, had managed to close her and offered Grenville help, but he told her in his disdainful way to leave him alone and to look after herself.

Howard, when he saw the predicament that the *Revenge* was in, made various attempts to come to her rescue—but in those days more depended on winds and tides than is now the case, and he was unable to reach the *Revenge*—and one cannot help thinking that he must have used pretty strong terms over Grenville having got himself, unnecessarily, into a very tight corner.

But how Grenville must have enjoyed his fight against such overwhelming odds — one against fifty-three—as the poet says, “ Was ever such a fight before ? ”

The day wore on and the night came and still Grenville and his little crew drove off the great Spanish ships and there were few that came close to the *Revenge* without repenting it, for as each ship arrived, she received a good broadside into her. The Spanish ships had not only their rigging shot away, but also the hulls of their ships shattered,

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and at least two of them, if not more, sank, and the losses amongst the Spanish soldiers and sailors were heavy.

As each Spaniard was driven off, Grenville goaded his men on to further fight. He was the spirit of the ship ; it is doubtful if any man but he could have gone on so long.

Nightfall came and the Spaniards thought that at last Grenville would give in, but they were mistaken. The *Revenge* was flying the flag of England, and Grenville would not lower it as long as he had power to resist, and so as the night wore on, the fight continued. The flames of the ships on fire and the flashes of the guns lit up this strange scene of the little *Revenge*, and the fifty-three—but Grenville's men were getting completely exhausted and each hour their number grew less. The decks were stinking of blood, and the wounded lay unattended in all parts of the ship.

As for the little *Revenge* herself, her masts, sails and rigging were torn and shattered, her stout bulwarks had been pierced and water was coming in through the holes. Grenville himself, though he had suffered all this while, knew naught else except : Fight on, fight on . . . His only anxiety was for the supply of powder, as the reports brought to him showed that the stock was getting exhausted. But even this did not deter him. “ Fight on, fight on,” said Sir Richard as he continued to engage ship after ship as they came down to try and grapple with his ship.

Unfortunately, near midnight Grenville was again

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wounded and had to be taken below to the low, ill-lit and smelly deck to have his wounds dressed by the surgeon. As he was being carried below he told those around him to go on with the fight. Whilst the surgeon was attending to his wounds by the aid of the light of a candle, a shot hit the surgeon and killed him and Grenville himself received yet another wound, but nothing short of death would make him give in.

By the early hours of the morning the *Revenge* was in a most pitiable condition ; her masts had gone and her sides riddled with holes, and as for the crew, they were nearly done—forty of them had been killed and more than that number wounded. The scene on board was indescribable ; in addition to the dead lying about the decks and the wounded, were the men who were so weak with scurvy they hardly knew how to go on and many of them did not care. But the stout heart of Grenville, with the blood of the West Country running in his veins, held out longer than any. As daylight was approaching, it was reported to Grenville that but one barrel of powder remained. Fifteen hours had elapsed since the fight had commenced, but Grenville did not admit of defeat yet. He appealed to his crew, or such as were around him, to go on—"Better trust to the mercy of God than to that of the Spaniards"—but his crew were played out and they were thinking of their wives and sweethearts in Devon. They had done their best and could do no more, and there appeared no reason to sacrifice unnecessarily, further life. If

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they had had anything left to fight with it would have been different—but now : no powder left, their small arms and pikes destroyed or broken—why be massacred ?

“Sink me the ship, Master Gunner,” whispered Grenville as he lay on the deck. “Into the hands of God, never into the hands of Spain.” The Master Gunner would have obeyed his Captain’s orders, but the remnants of the crew prevented him from doing so. One cannot blame them. The *Revenge* was to all intents and purposes a total wreck and there was already six feet of water in her hold and it was increasing every minute. The nerves of the men who remained alive were as shattered as the ship was. Grenville’s wish to sink the ship and to sink with it was not fulfilled. The *Revenge* was surrendered and Grenville, weary and worn, was taken on board the Spanish flagship, where he was treated with all consideration due to a gallant gentleman.

The *Revenge*, as would have been Grenville’s wish, never reached harbour, for she foundered in the storm which followed this great battle.

Grenville, bitter at the surrender of his ship and suffering grievously from his wounds, did not live long ; two days after being taken on board the Spanish ship he died—as the official report would say “of his wounds”—as the man in the street would say, “of a broken heart.”

As Grenville lay dying, his last words were :
“Here die I, Richard Grenville, with joyful heart

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and quiet mind, for that I have ended my life as a good soldier ought to do, who has fought for his country, Queen, religion and honour."

II

"SHARK"

1916

THE DAY had arrived—May 31st, 1916. For those who are interested in superstition, lucky or unlucky dates, it may be noted that this was the last day of a month, in the same way that the great fight of Richard Grenville was also on the last day of a month.

It is common knowledge that for many years the British and German Fleets had been building against each other, in spite of the attempts of many statesmen of high position to deny the fact. The average British sailor had in his mind a war with Germany sooner or later, and the German sailor went a little bit further and would toast "to the Day"—the day when the Armadas of these two great nations would meet in deadly combat. The general idea was probably that when war came, as come it must, the two Navies would fight in the debonair manner of their ancestors, though Germany had few sea traditions to look back on.

The submarine warfare rather altered the feelings which one Navy might have had for the other. This was a great pity from many points of view,

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as a good many officers and men of both Navies had pleasant recollections of friendly meetings on board or ashore during the years of peace between the two countries. In fact, just previous to the outbreak of war a British squadron was at Kiel “ententing,” to use a modern word, with the German Fleet.

War undoubtedly stirred up a certain amount of anger and even hatred, but this story is concerned with a very gallant gentleman who fought his ship like Grenville of old.

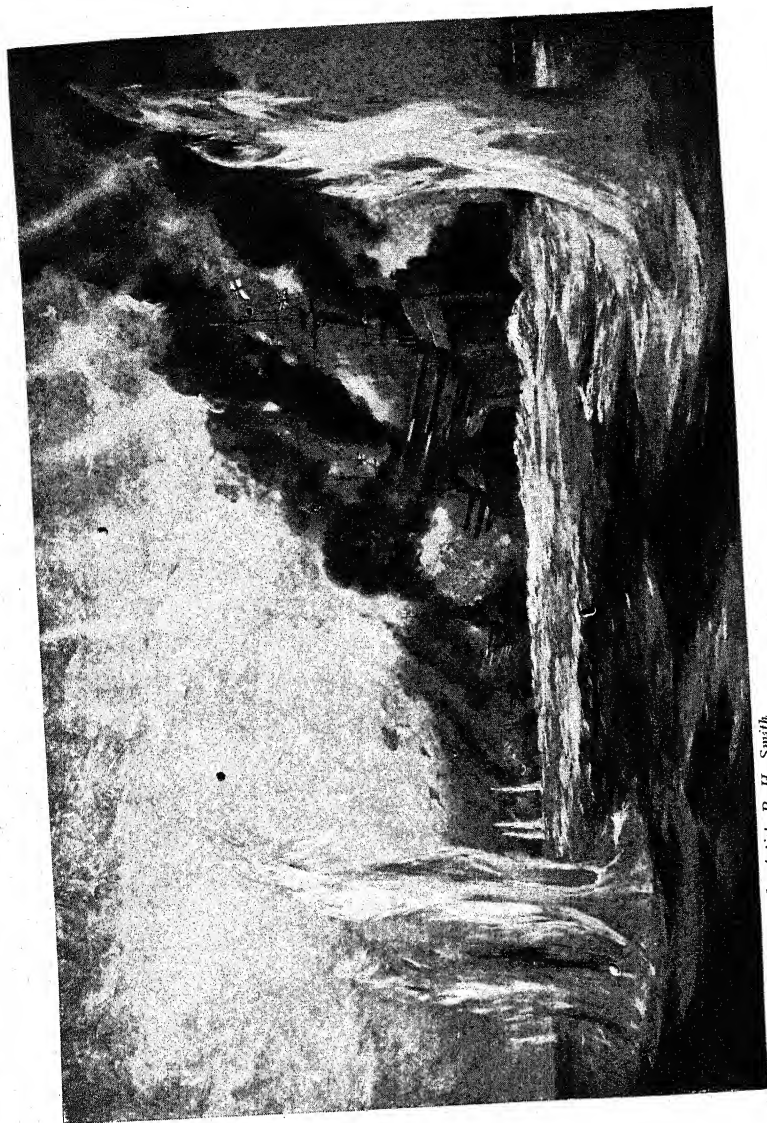
By the time 1916 had arrived everything had changed since the last time the British Navy was engaged in a fleet action. Now, no longer the stately sail of the line, the frigates with every inch of canvas spread, and the slower provision boats dependent for their speed on the wind. Now, ships, if they wished to go a certain speed or steer a certain course, could do so by a single order to the engine-room or a turn of a little wheel which also worked an engine. Close action for boarding purposes in day time was out of the question, though in another chapter is related a very close action at night.

But in spite of all the changes that had been brought about by the development of science since the days of the Armada, yet—when the Day came—and when the Battle of Jutland took place—two very important factors, as of old, again played an important part. The weather, which has at all times been liable to deny sailors a victory, which might otherwise have been obtained, now denied

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the British Commander-in-Chief, Admiral Lord Jellicoe, the total destruction of the enemy fleet which he might otherwise have secured. Mist and thick weather did not stop the ships from using their powerful instruments of war, but stopped them from seeing each other. The other factor also will for ever remain, namely personal initiative and personal courage, which maintains in a body of men of spirit which is essential to any nation desirous of retaining the traditions which have helped to make it a nation at all.

This latter factor was not lacking in this great sea fight, when over three hundred ships in all were engaged. On the night of May 30th, the two great Armadas of Britain and Germany were approaching each other in the North Sea, neither side knowing whether they would meet in action or not. Admiral Jellicoe, with the main portion of the Grand Fleet, had steamed out of Scapa Flow, Admiral Jerran with another Battle Squadron had left Cromarty, and Admiral Beatty, with his Battle Cruisers, had left Rosyth. Through the dark night these three admirals led their squadrons to meet at a rendezvous the next day, when Jellicoe would be in supreme command of the greatest Fleet the world had ever seen. One may pause to think of his responsibility. No one man held such power in his hand as Jellicoe, and he was the only man who stood between Germany and the world, and although the mist denied him a great victory, the Grand Fleet remained after the battle, as before—Britain's Sure Shield.



By kind permission of the Artist, R. H. Smith

BATTLE OF JUTLAND

“ Sink Me the Ship, Master Gunner ”

When day broke on the morning of May 31st, the North Sea, if one could have had a bird's eye view, would have disclosed the fact that Admiral von Scheer, in command of the German High Sea Fleet, was heading straight for the Grand Fleet. Super Dreadnoughts, battle cruisers, light cruisers, destroyers, aircraft carriers, submarines and Zeppelins were, still in ignorance of each other's presence, rapidly converging. Everything that science could devise was being brought into use. Jellicoe could talk to the Admiralty by wireless, at the same time to his various admirals. Guns with ten miles range were ready to be fired when the order was given, torpedoes carrying death with them twenty feet below the water were ready in the tubes to be fired if ships got within range. The German submarines were lying submerged in various parts of the North Sea, with a careful look-out being kept through their periscopes, and as opportunity offered they fired their deadly torpedoes at the British Fleet and many of Beatty's squadron had narrow escapes. The Admiralty, realising “ The Day ” might be at hand, pressed the button that put other machines in motion besides the Grand Fleet ; Commodore Tyrwhitt with his famous Harwich force of light cruisers and destroyers left harbour to be ready at hand if required, Admiral Sir E. Bradford, who commanded the older battleships, left the Thames to support if needed. Dockyards and docks around the coast were ready to receive damaged ships, wireless and coastguard stations were fully manned

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to pass any important information at a second's notice. The coastal patrols, whether torpedo boats, submarines, yachts, trawlers, motor launches or drifters, were all standing by.

At 2.20 in the afternoon, Beatty, who was on his way to rendezvous with Jellicoe as arranged, received information from his light cruisers or frigates that the enemy was in sight, and this was confirmed by his aircraft*. Beatty at once ordered full speed ahead and with his battle cruisers and other ships dashed at the enemy at over twenty-five knots. His flag was flying in the *Lion*, and the ships in his Battle Cruiser Fleet which followed him bore such famous names as *Queen Mary*, *Princess Royal*, *Indefatigable*, *New Zealand*, and *Tiger*. The action between the British and German battle cruisers was the preliminary to the engagement between the two main fleets. Wireless messages were being passed between Beatty and Jellicoe, who was rapidly steaming south with the main portion of the Fleet. Although out of sight of each other they were able to inform each other of what was going on, in spite of the fact that the enemy were trying to "jam" the messages. Beatty meanwhile was engaging the enemy battle cruisers and although he had seen two of his Fleet, the *Queen Mary* and the *Indefatigable*, blown sky high, he went on—only a man of indomitable courage could have done so.

At first Beatty was only engaged with the German battle cruisers, but then he got news that

* The first time aircraft had been used in a fleet action.

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they were but the outposts of the great High Sea Fleet. Knowing that Jellicoe was coming south, he decided to egg the whole lot on, and by careful manœuvring he decoyed the High Sea Fleet northwards. Jellicoe had heard the tick-tick-tick of the wireless messages and was bringing his Fleet to the assistance of Beatty (who was bearing the brunt of the fighting) as fast as he could.

Each unit of the fleets engaged had its part to play ; the various groups of destroyers, or divisions as they are called, had especially to be ready to dash here, there, and everywhere, as they might be required. Some of these divisions were attached to the battle squadrons, others to the battle cruisers. They might be required to stick close to their bigger ships to protect them or they might be required to dash out and attack or repel the ships of the enemy whether big or small. Their value as units was obviously small—what was the worth of a little ship of 500 tons with perhaps 100 men on board compared with a super-ship of 30,000 tons with over 1,000 men on board ? The initiative, courage and daring of the commanding officers of these little vessels are beyond all praise ; they displayed the spirit of their forefathers.

Jellicoe was bringing his Fleet into action with all the skill that any human could devise. He had with him three battle cruisers under Admiral Hood (from the Dover Patrol).* These he sent

* Admiral Hood went down with his flagship and crew at a later time in the action.

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ahead with an escort of destroyers to protect the squadron from submarine attacks. Hood also had with him light cruisers in addition to the destroyers—as look-outs, and to drive off small craft. Amongst the destroyers was one called the *Shark*, commanded by Loftus Jones. The *Shark* was only a small vessel of less than a thousand tons, but Loftus Jones held the proud position of being leader of a division of four similar destroyers.

About 5.30, Hood in the *Invincible*, was tearing through the mist, ahead of Jellicoe, in order to support Beatty's hard-tried Battle Cruiser Fleet. He had his light cruisers and destroyers ahead of him. The atmosphere was thick with the smoke of shot and shell, and in addition to this was the unfortunate mist which had descended on the two Armadas. Loftus Jones, with his division of destroyers, was acting as a "screen" for Hood, and sighted through the mist some German light cruisers which were apparently trying to escape from Hood's battle cruisers, which were dashing ahead at some thirty knots.

Leading a division into an attack under heavy fire from the enemy is an experience that must be gone through to be properly realised. From the captain on the bridge to the stoker down in the stokehold, each person on board had his part to play. The captain of a destroyer has the advantage of having some of the atmosphere around him which our old-time sailors had. He is not locked up in a thickly-armoured conning-tower or fire control position; he is on the open

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bridge and exposed to danger like Nelson was on the poop of the *Victory*. The fact that he is thus personally exposed to danger has great influence on the *morale* of his crew.

It was in such a position that Jones found himself, and he knew that not only the other captains of the destroyers following him were equally exposed, but also the men at the guns, at the torpedo tubes and at the various other stations required for action. These captains of destroyers knew each of their men personally and with light hearts they were thus able to do what Jones did—dash in where others might have feared to tread. The whole battle of Jutland teems with dashing engagements between the destroyers of the two Fleets; Bingham in the destroyer *Nestor* and Tovey in the *Onslow* have each to their credit deeds which cannot be told now. Destroyer captains are of the same breed as the old frigate captains—they are not necessarily experts in gunnery or torpedo, or any of the fine arts which the Navy has developed, but they have the great advantage of being seamen and have something in them which savours of the old spirit of close action with the enemy.

Jones had a great feeling of confidence as he led his division of four destroyers straight at the enemy light cruisers and was not dismayed when he found that, in addition to light cruisers, he was up against destroyers as well. His job was, at all costs, to prevent the destroyers attacking Admiral Hood's Squadron. Nobly he did it by this daring

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frontal attack. "Close action" is an instinct in the minds of all destroyer captains; they are prepared to leave long range manœuvres to more scientific officers.

Dashing at full speed he got as close to the enemy as he could and in spite of the shot and shell, he fired two torpedoes which, apparently, did not reach their mark. The attack of the enemy intensified as the *Shark* approached and she was liberally smothered in splashes and spray.

After firing his torpedoes, Jones turned his ship right round to get back to his supporting cruisers. Whilst he was turning several shells hit the *Shark*, and not only were his main engines partially put out of action, but also the steering-engine was damaged, so that for a few minutes the ship was unable to steer, but Jones at once gave orders for the hand-steering position to be manned, which meant that the ship would have to be steered from the stern end of the ship instead of from the bridge as was normally the case.

As this change over was taking place the *Shark* could only steam at slow speed. A big shell suddenly hit her on the forecastle and the whole gun's crew there were killed. Seeing something was amiss, one of Jones's division, the *Acasta*, rushed up ready to succour the *Shark* and (destroyers being ready for anything) fully prepared to take her in tow—but Jones curtly refused as Grenville had done before. He was not going to risk another ship as well as his own, and

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preferred to fight on by himself, well knowing the odds were against him.

By chance, one of our light cruisers, the *Canterbury*, had suddenly hove in sight out of the mist, and the German cruisers, on sighting her, at once went after her, giving the *Shark* a little respite for the time being.

But the *Shark* was by this time in a dangerous condition and only had one gun left to fight with. Jones, seeing that his ship was doomed and not wishing to waste life unnecessarily, gave orders for the boats to be got ready for the last emergency, but when the seamen went to obey his order it was found that most of them had either been shot away or so damaged as to be useless.

The *Shark* was not left long in peace before more German destroyers came up and renewed the attack. Jones re-opened fire and himself went to the gun to supervise the control, but the enemy fired salvo after salvo at the stricken *Shark* and, coming on at great speed, closed to less than 1,000 yards. Jones unfortunately was wounded, but he continued to command the action till all the gun's crew were killed except three men, but even these few went on firing, and although the *Shark* was thus left with little to fight with, the enemy ships did not go unscathed and got a good few shells to disturb them.

Whilst the fight was at its height Jones was badly wounded by the fragments of a shell which severed his left leg. As of old, the few men around him gathered to his rescue and carried him towards

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the stern of the ship. This they would do automatically, as the captain's cabin was in the stern of the ship and the sailors would, forgetting all about the battle, think that the captain ought to be placed in his bunk.

It was the same old story of the *Revenge* and such actions over again. After Jones had been laid in the stern he noticed that the White Ensign was not flying properly; what had happened was that the gaff on which it was hoisted had been shot away, but he probably did not realise that, in his pain, and thought his ship must have struck to the enemy. A seaman and a midshipman soon got the ensign flying clear once more at the yard-arm. This cheered Jones, who was now in a serious condition, but he continued to encourage his men to go on—with what or how he probably didn't know, but there is no doubt that at the back of his mind he had the one idea of "Fight on, fight on."

It is always impossible to say with accuracy what is in a man's mind when he is dying, but judging by the way Loftus Jones had fought his ship, one can well imagine him saying, when he saw her hopeless condition, "Sink me the ship, Master Gunner!" And even as Sir Richard Grenville is supposed to have said, "Into the hands of God, never into the hands of Spain"—so might Jones have thought, "Into the hands of God, never into the hands of Germany."

The German ships closed quickly in on the now disabled *Shark*, and at close range fired two tor-

“ Sink Me the Ship, Master Gunner ”

pedoes at the helpless vessel, and at 7 p.m., the time when the great battleships had become engaged in action, the *Shark* sank—not surrendered—with the White Ensign still flying at the stump of her mizzenmast. Only a few survivors escaped on a raft or what is known as a Carley Float, and were eventually, by the providence of God, rescued about 10 p.m. by a neutral steamer.

Jones had fought to the end, and with most of his crew he gave his life. A posthumous Victoria Cross was awarded him for his conspicuous bravery. If one wished to continue the story one would quote: “ Here die I ”—enough has been said.

CHAPTER III

A DREAM COMES TRUE

1793

EDWARD PELLEW, afterwards Viscount Exmouth,* was a sailor who had a most remarkable and varied career, and there appears to have been something in common between him and Cochrane.† Both were full of original ideas and both were inclined to be insubordinate. In bravery and daring Pellew had few equals, and his success, like Cochrane's, was due to his own merits.

Born in 1757, he joined the Navy when he was thirteen, and followed a career which included service all over the world, both on sea and on land, his first ship being the *Juno*, a ship with a great record—one of the exploits of her is told elsewhere in this book. In addition to a variety of fights, which made him so famous, Pellew distinguished himself one day by diving off the yard and saving a man from drowning. One of his first escapades was when he left his ship at Marseilles, although only a midshipman, owing to a dispute with his captain. His captain had a lady friend

* See Chapter IX.

† See Appendix.

A Dream Comes True. 1793

on board, who was the cause of the trouble. A pal of Pellew ran foul of the good lady, and in consequence the captain ordered the young gentleman ashore. Pellew, who had no concern in the row, refused to leave his pal and went ashore with him.

This little incident gives an idea of his independent character, and another little incident which took place when he was a youngster shows his high spirits and personal courage, for when the ship in which he was serving was taking General Burgoyne to North America, orders were given to "man the yards" in honour of this distinguished visitor; and when the General looked aloft to see this always attractive sight, he was amazed to see one midshipman standing on his head at the end of the yard—a most dangerous and dare-devil thing to do. The captain of the ship assured the General it was all right, as it was only young Pellew.

In spite of his distinguished service, Pellew at times found himself for long periods on shore, a very frequent occurrence in those days, when the Navy, between the various wars, was reduced to the lowest possible limits. People are often apt to forget that the reductions in the Service, and hardships caused to individuals after the last Great War, were merely a repetition of what has always happened after wars, the difference being that in modern days the hardships do not fall quite so heavily as they used to do. Pellew, for instance, once had a spell of no less than four years

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ashore, and he was again unemployed just previous to the action which brought him great fame.

In the early days of 1793, Pellew was attempting the thankless task of making a farm pay on an estate in Cornwall. He had very little knowledge of farming, but like many another sailor, when unable to follow the profession he loved, thought he would turn his hand to farming as being a healthy and open-air life—or perhaps a sailor has an idea that if he can plough the sea, he will probably be able to plough the land. In any case, he was not altogether happy, as he could not make it pay, and, as he said, "It made his eyes ache watching his crops growing"; so when he heard of another war with France, no conveyance was swift enough to take him to London and place his services at the disposal of the Admiralty. His past record held him in good stead, and he was overjoyed when he was given command of the 36-gun frigate *Nymphe*, a ship which had been captured in a previous war from the French. He proceeded post-haste to Portsmouth and lost no time in fitting his ship out. This was a comparatively simple matter, but he had a good deal of difficulty in getting a crew together, as the Navy on a peace footing had only about 16,000 men, whereas now, with the large number of ships being fitted out, at least five times that number was required. At that time the "press gang" was the most common form of obtaining men, which meant that men were pressed, a rather

A Dream Comes True. 1793

forcible form of conscription, into the Service. But Pellew believed in one volunteer being worth three pressed men, and so he set his thoughts working as to what could be done.

Pellew's residence in Cornwall had helped him to form an idea that a miner would make a good sailor, and as events will show, he was not mistaken. With the aid of his elder brother, who lived near Falmouth, he got about eighty Cornish miners to volunteer. They had to journey round to Portsmouth and joined his ship at Spithead. Pellew, as soon as he had sufficient men on board, took the *Nymphe* to Falmouth, which was close to his farm, and was, by his personal influence, able to get some more miners and seamen to join and complete his complement. Needless to say, this very raw crew had to be knocked into shape and also trained as quickly as possible. But, given the right spirit and a good will, it is extraordinary what a lot can be done in a short time. This is borne out in various incidents described in this book, especially during the Great War, when merchant seamen, fishermen, yachtsmen, and what one might call "ordinary civilians" quickly qualified to become useful personnel in the Royal Navy. Pellew spent a good deal of time in personally supervising the training of his crew, and would himself frequently take a turn at the wheel or any other job, just to show how it ought to be done and to keep up the spirit of his men. Men always like to feel they are serving under a man who can "do the job himself" in preference to a

Sailormen All

man whom they think can only give orders, without knowing what it feels like to obey them.

Eventually Pellew got his crew "shaken down," and by June they were as keen on a fight with the enemy as their captain. They reckoned they could trim their sails as smartly as any other frigate in the Navy, and they had become experts at manning and working the guns. The *Nymph* happened to be lying at Falmouth about the time when Pellew got news of some French frigates being in the Channel. This was what he had been waiting for, and loud cheers were raised as the crew heard the news. Those on shore were recalled, and got on board by shore boats or ships' boats, whichever were quicker. The crew on board, running about the decks as they had never run before, got the boats in, the sails unfurled and the guns ready for action.

As soon as all the crew were on board and the sails unfurled, Pellew gave the order for the anchor to be weighed. The crew already manning the capstan walked it round and round, whilst the fiddler standing on top of it kept time as they sang their sea shanty. As soon as the anchor was clear, Pellew, with his sails set, trimmed them so as to gain every advantage of the wind as he proceeded to sea, and Falmouth once more witnessed the beautiful sight of one of His Majesty's frigates sailing through the narrow entrance of the harbour and out into the English Channel.

A Dream Comes True. 1793

The chances of a fight were good, as the French frigates were probably as keen for it as Pellew was. By a strange coincidence Pellew's brother, Isaac, who was on board with him as a volunteer, had dreamt that he shot away the wheel of a French frigate, and the Master's mate, Mr. Pearse, had also had a dream that the day after going to sea they would meet a frigate and kill her captain. The sailors pretended not to be superstitious and cracked many jokes at the expense of the Master's mate, but, strange to relate, the dreams came true in a rather remarkable way.

The night was spent in beating up Channel over the waters Pellew knew so well, and on the day after sailing the *Nymph* was off Start Point, when, as the darkness was giving way to the first streaks of dawn, a sail was sighted to the southward. Everyone took it for granted that it must be an enemy ship, as in spite of the way sailors often pretend to scoff at superstitions and dreams, yet they generally have lurking at the back of their minds the feeling of half wondering whether they will not come true, and one can imagine the remarks of "I told you so" going on.

As soon as the sail was identified as a French ship, a shout of "Enemy in Sight" ran through the ship, and the crew without orders ran to their guns. Pellew at once ordered all sail to be set, and the crew, jumping at his command, ran hither and thither hauling on the ropes and setting every stitch of canvas the ship could carry. Then

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Pellew boldly bore down in chase of the stranger, which turned out to be the *Cléopâtre*, a French frigate of thirty-six guns, commanded by a very well-known and famous French sailor, Captain Mullan, a man worthy of Pellew's steel. The two ships were pretty evenly matched, but the Frenchmen had been in commission for some time, and had the advantage therefore of a crew long used to working together.

Pellew realised when he saw the seamanlike manner in which the *Cléopâtre* was handled that he was in for a tough fight, but he had little doubt that what his crew lacked in the way of experience would be made up in bravery, and the fact that this was one of the first actions of the war stirred them to the importance of giving a lead to the King's Navy and a lesson to the French Republic. Mullan and his men were no doubt imbued with similar ideas, as when the British colours were made out, he at once shortened sail and prepared for battle.

Pellew, as the ships were approaching, mustered together all his crew and gave them a few words of exhortation. Speaking as a Cornishman himself, he appealed to the hardy Cornish miners in a way they could readily understand, and when at 6 a.m. the two ships were close together and within hailing distance, the British crew sent up a great cheer and a shout of "Long live King George!" The Frenchmen, not to be outdone, raised an English cheer in reply, while Mullan came to the gangway and, waving his hat, shouted,

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"Vive la République!" Obviously the men had in their minds the thoughts of a fight between the Republic and the Monarchy, as, just before the action commenced, a French sailor ran aloft and attached to the masthead the "cap of liberty"—a red block of wood in the shape of a cap with brass spear.

When these preliminaries were over, it was a case of "seconds out of the ring," and the two adversaries let go at each other. One cannot help pondering a moment to think in what a gentlemanly manner fighting was carried out in those days, when ships could come close alongside like this and hail each other with a more or less friendly greeting, instead of as now with aircraft spotters and wireless detectors being able to knock each other to smithereens without even seeing each other.

The *Nymphé* was on the quarter of the *Cléopâtre* when, at 6.15 a.m., Pellew raised his hat, the prearranged signal for his crew to open fire. Immediately the two ships fired off every gun that would bear and both were soon enveloped in smoke as they became hotly engaged. They were sailing along with the wind behind them, firing at each other as they went on side by side. The crew of the *Nymphé*, in spite of their short training, fought with great gallantry and might well have been seamen all their lives; and many individual acts of bravery took place. Some of the youngest men had opportunities of showing their worth; for instance, a young boy who was a barber by trade

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was working with the crew of one of the main deck guns, when the captain of the gun was killed. Without hesitation this lad at once took charge of the gun as if he had been born for no other job, and continued to fight it throughout the action.

Pellew manœuvred his ship into the more favourable position, and was able to pour a heavy broadside into the French ship. Mullon hauled up and would have gone off on the larboard tack, but Pellew's brother Isaac had been busy trying to make his dream come true and had kept some of the main deck guns constantly firing at the wheel. One helmsman after another had been killed—four in all—and eventually the wheel was shot away just as the Frenchman was hauling up—a lucky shot at a lucky moment. By the irony of fate it was through the *Nymphe's* wheel being shot away that she had been captured from the French in a previous action.

The *Cléopâtre* was at once put out of control and to add to their difficulties the British fire, which had been directed a good deal aft, brought down the *Cléopâtre's* mizzenmast almost at the same time. It fell over the side, sails and rigging went too, and effectively masked the fire of many of the French guns.

Mullon now found his ship in a bad way and practically unmanageable; the wind took her right round and in a few moments she ran into the *Nymphe*, the jib-boom of the *Cléopâtre* passing between the fore and main masts of the *Nymphe*.

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For a moment Pellew thought he would lose his mainmast, as the rigging had already been badly damaged and the mast was left with little support—but, as luck would have it, the jib-boom was carried away first and the two ships fell alongside each other bow to stern. But no sooner had the *Nymphe* escaped without the loss of her mainmast than once more it was endangered, as the *Cléopâtre's* yard caught in the main topsail of the *Nymphe*. Realising the danger, a seaman at once nipped aloft and cut away the ropes, thereby once more saving the *Nymphe* from a mishap which would have been serious.

In the meantime, Pellew, knowing that the Frenchman had a bigger crew on board, expected to be boarded and ordered his crew to be ready to repel boarders with their muskets and pikes; at the same time he let go an anchor with the hopes of separating the two ships; with the *Nymphe* stationary, the wind would probably take the French ship clear, and Pellew hoped to destroy his antagonist by gunfire. Both ships were now firing into each other at very close range, and much havoc was wrought in each. The crews, too, were suffering many casualties and some of the *Nymphe's* guns had but one or two men left to fight them, but still they went on though the rate of fire was of course greatly reduced. Pellew, peering through the smoke, saw that the *Cléopâtre* was far more damaged than he anticipated, and he had an idea that he would have a reasonable chance of taking the ship by boarding. His boarding

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party were standing ready for his word, and when he shouted the order to "board," they didn't need to be told twice. Headed by their officers and with a great cheer, they dashed on board the fore-castle of the French ship and through the main deck ports, each man scrambling to be the first on board.

In spite of their superiority in numbers, the Frenchmen could not resist the onslaught of the British, and using their cutlasses with great effect by countering and counter countering* they fought hand to hand, wrestling with the Frenchmen to get their weapons from them. They cheered and fought their way aft inch by inch to the quarter-deck, slashing right and left. By 7.10 they had succeeded in completely overpowering the Frenchmen, who had begun to lose heart when they saw their captain hit by a shot and fall. The *Cléopâtre* was soon obliged to surrender and down came the proud French flag.

As Pellew wrote in one of his letters, he had "dished them up in fifty minutes." The action had been much briefer than even Pellew could have anticipated and it speaks wonders for the training he had given them and for the men themselves. The moral obviously is, "When you run short of sailors get Cornish miners."

The fierceness of the fight can be gauged by the severe losses on both sides, the *Nymphé* having

* Even as late as 1909, I remember the Commander-in-Chief, inspecting the ship in which I was a lieutenant, and ordering me to take charge of a party of sailors and put them through cutlass drill.

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twenty-three killed and twenty-seven wounded, and the *Cléopatre* a still greater number. One of the British wounded did not realise for some time that he had been wounded—he had only joined the ship at Falmouth the day before, and had fought like a Trojan. He complained after the battle that he felt quite well during the fight, but he didn't feel well after it ; on examination it was found that a musket ball had penetrated his leg, but he had not noticed it during the excitement of fighting !

Amongst the *Nymphe's* killed was Mr. Pearse, and sad to relate he did not live to see his dream come true, though the facts of it were found written in his diary.

Captain Mullan fought gallantly to the end, and when mortally wounded, he seized, as he thought, the secret signals from his pocket with the intention of devouring them to prevent them falling into the hands of the British. And, as he died, he was found with a lot of paper in his mouth, but in his agony he had not realised that it was his own commission he was chewing up and not the signals. One feels sorry that such a gallant act should not have been successful. All honours were paid to Captain Mullan when a few days later he was buried with full naval honours at Portsmouth.

Pellew took his prize to Portsmouth and in due course he was knighted by the King, an honour he had well earned, and which was followed by many similar honours in years to come.

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This action caused a great stir in England when the news became known, as apart from the fact that it took place so close off the English coast, it was also the first success of the war.

CHAPTER IV

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

SOME names have a fascination for one and *Mary Rose* has always attracted me. I felt that any ship bearing that name must have been very demure and even shy. It is a name that many ships have borne, but far from being shy, they have generally been very forward.

One of the earliest *Mary Roses* was a fine buxom ship of sixty guns, which in 1545 sailed from Portsmouth to attack the French Fleet off the Isle of Wight. Unfortunately *Mary Rose* went in for a low waist line, and her gun ports were only a foot or so from the water line, with the disastrous result that when overtaken by a squall, she sank with practically the whole of her crew. Her decayed body was found in 1835.

But there have been other *Mary Roses* before and since.

Two short, sharp actions, much separated by length of years, but similar in the gallantry of their commanders against overwhelming odds, come to mind.

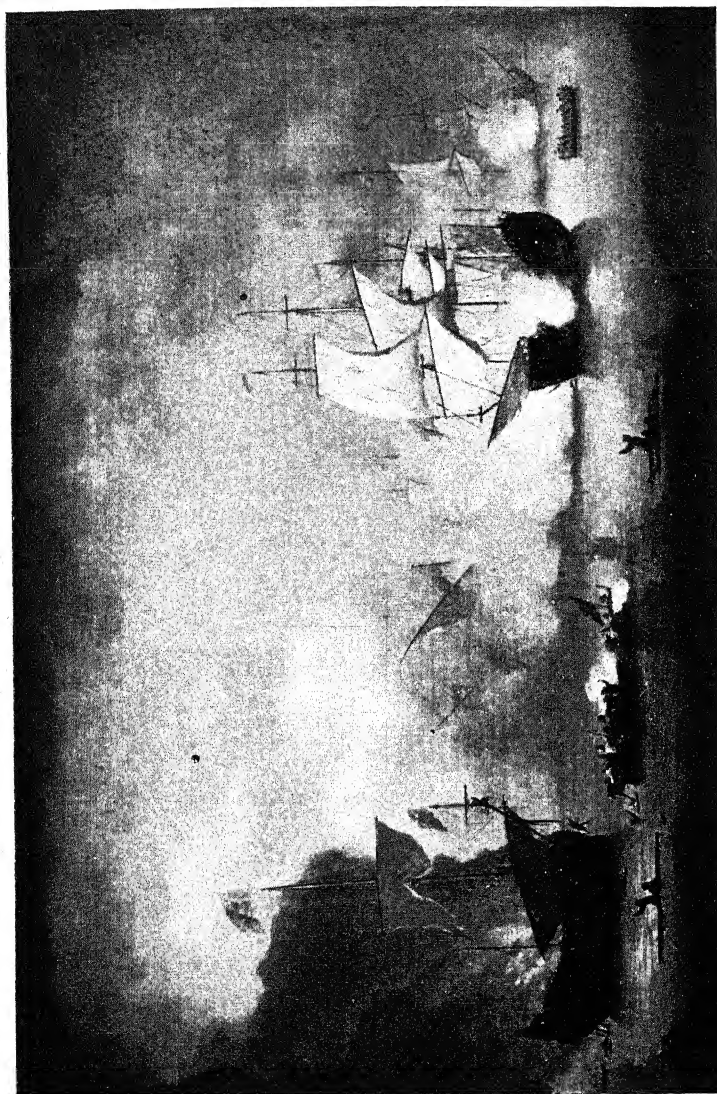
Sailormen All

I.

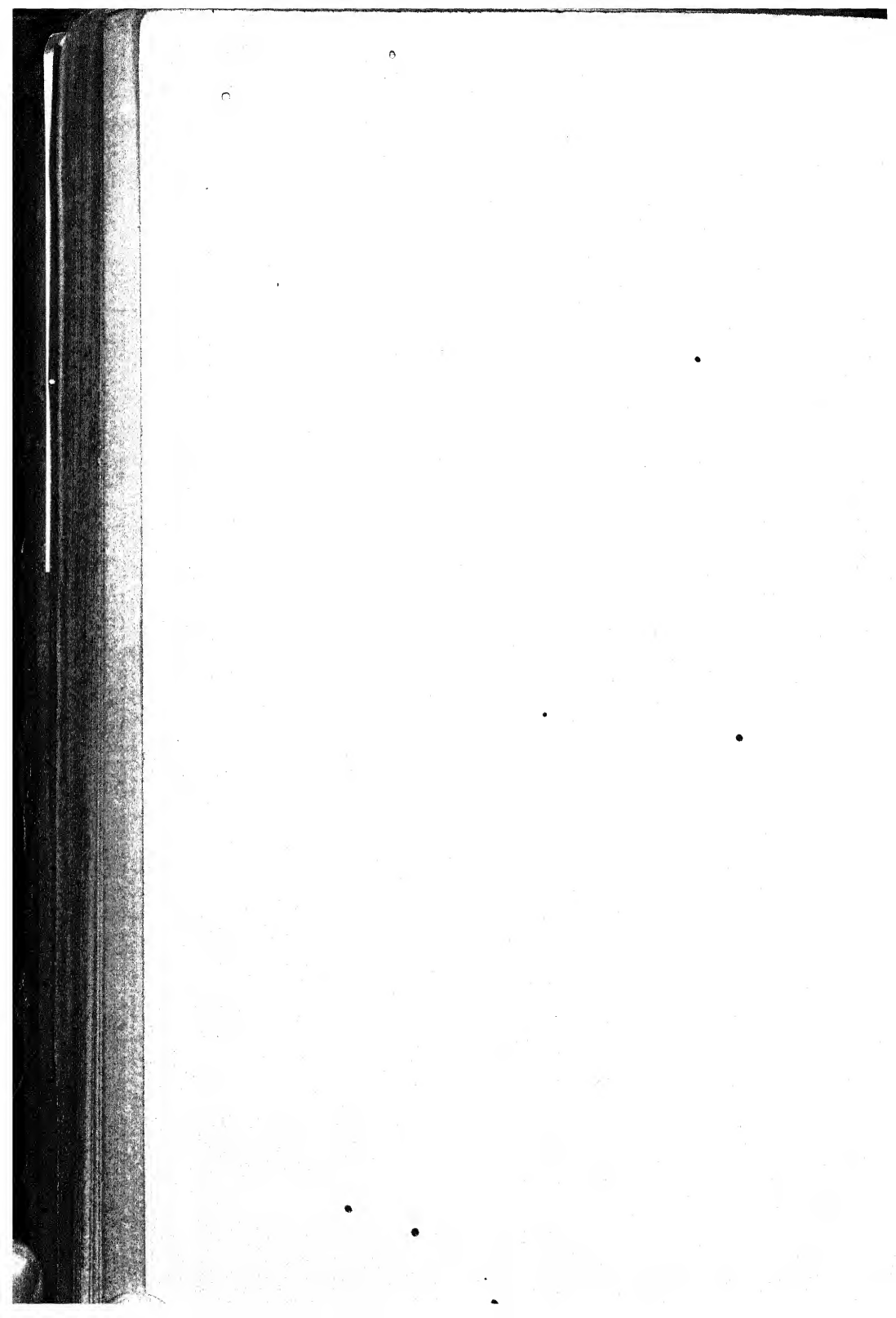
"MARY ROSE," 1669

In 1669 there was a *Mary Rose* commanded by a West Country man, by name Captain John Kempthorne, who had already made his name in the Mediterranean as captain of a merchant vessel.* On one occasion when he was carrying a large quantity of specie in the shape of silver coins called "pieces of eight," he was attacked by a large Spanish man-of-war. Kempthorne had but a few guns to defend himself with, and only a small amount of ammunition, which was soon exhausted. Remembering his cargo he thought it better to annoy the Spaniards with it than allow them to enrich themselves with it. So he gave orders to his men to load their guns with the money and proceeded to fire it into the Spanish ship, doing much damage to their rigging. Eventually he was overpowered and had to surrender, but the Spaniards thought so highly of his valour that he was allowed to return to England. A little later he was given a commission in the Navy, and given command of the *Mary Rose*, a small ship with only forty-eight guns and with a crew of about two hundred men. Kempthorne found himself under rather different circumstances back in the Mediterranean doing convoy work and other

* Dr. John Campbell, "Lives of Admirals."



By kind permission of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty:—from the Painted Hall, Greenwich
“ MARY ROSE ”



What's in a Name?

duties. In December of 1669, he was in charge of a convoy which was bound for Tangier, and whilst passing through the Straits of Gibraltar he suddenly spied seven Algerian corsairs bearing down on him.

The North African coast was well known at that time to be infested with pirates, ever on the lookout to capture more ships and treasure. Kempthorne had no doubt hoped to have kept a course which would have been safer than the one he was on, but a gale had blown him and his convoy to leeward. Kempthorne at once ordered his convoy to make their escape whilst he boldly stood towards the Algerian ships, which were very fully manned. His first thought had been the safety of the convoy. In order to ensure this as far as he could he was willing to risk his own ship against this formidable enemy. The Algerians obviously treated the *Mary Rose* with a certain amount of contempt, for one or two of them went off after some Moorish ships instead of combining in the attack.

Kempthorne, single-handed though he was, kept up a great fight with the enemy, who attacked him with much fierceness. The *Mary Rose* was quickly hemmed in on all sides, and the Algerians tried to board her both from their vessels and also from the boats they put in the water, but Kempthorne and his crew offered a most stubborn resistance, and as fast as the Algerians came, so were they driven back. The *Mary Rose* herself was badly damaged, but most of the shots struck the masts and the rigging. During the hand-to-hand fighting in

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which Kempthorne was always to the fore, about a dozen of her crew were killed. This does not sound a very great loss to be incurred in such a struggle, but in those days the weapons of destruction were nothing like what they are now.*

Whilst the fight was going on the convoy had all got away and no damage came to them, so that Kempthorne's main object was achieved; but he had to keep up his fight for four hours and succeeded in inflicting great damage on his opponents, reducing at least one of them to a sinking condition. The Algerians eventually retired, sorry and sore, and Kempthorne, after repairing his rigging and getting up his spare sails from the hold, took his crippled ship to Cadiz.† On returning to England he was knighted for his great bravery, which was recorded in verse, but with probably a poet's licence of imagination :

“ Two we burnt and two we sunk and two did run away,
And one carried we to Leghorn Roads to show we'd won the day.”

* The best idea of this fight can be got from a great sea picture to be seen at Greenwich, which shows how the Algerians tried to board not only by laying their ships alongside, but also by sending parties of men over in rowing boats.

† Kempthorne's son had a similar action at the age of 23, when he too engaged seven Algerians. He did even better than his father, for he sank three of them, though he himself was mortally wounded.

What's in a Name?

II

"MARY ROSE," 1917

On a winter's day of 1917, another *Mary Rose* was escorting a convoy, this time across the North Sea. This *Mary Rose* was a modern destroyer, with quick-firing guns and torpedoes. Her captain was Lieutenant Commander Fox. The convoy was on its way to Norway from Lerwick, and was mostly composed of neutral ships.

In addition to the *Mary Rose*, which was well ahead of the convoy, there was another destroyer, the *Strongbow*—Lieutenant Commander Brooke—and a couple of trawlers.

At this period, these convoys were most liable to attacks from submarines, which was the reason for the destroyer and trawler escort, as being the most suitable method for dealing with this particular type of enemy. Had any surface craft been expected to interfere with the convoy, larger vessels would have been used to escort it.

Early in the morning—shortly after 6 a.m.—after leaving Lerwick, Fox in the *Mary Rose*, which was about eight miles ahead of the convoy, heard gunfire, and saw flashes astern of him; he at once turned round, and ran down at full speed, thinking no doubt that the convoy was being attacked by a submarine. The crew of the *Mary Rose* quickly manned their guns ready for action.

The morning was dark and it was blowing fresh

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so that at first Fox could not see what had happened. As it turned out the convoy was being attacked by two enemy cruisers ; they had been sighted by the *Strongbow*, which at first must have thought they were British, till the " challenge " which they made failed to receive the correct reply, and almost before they were aware of it, shells had burst all over the ship, doing terrible damage, killing and wounding many of the crew including the Captain. The *Strongbow* was badly mauled in a few minutes. Resistance was hopeless, and amongst other damage done the main steam pipe had been severed. Brooke, who had been hit in the leg, gave orders for the ship to be sunk and the men to take to the raft.

When Fox arrived, he quickly realised that it was no case of a submarine, but of powerful surface craft. His crew were standing round the guns ready to fire at a periscope. Had he known what he was up against he would no doubt have had his men round the torpedo tubes, though it did not take long to shift from one to the other. Like Kempthorne in another *Mary Rose*, Fox's first thought was the safety of the convoy. Regardless of everything, he dashed at full speed at the enemy ; totally outmatched though he was in numbers, guns, and speed, he approached them at thirty knots, throwing the spray all around as he tore through the water. No doubt he hoped to attract the enemy ships away from the convoy, and perhaps get a successful torpedo attack home. With shell falling all around, Fox dashed right in

What's in a Name?

to 3,000 yards, under the very nose of the enemy, his little guns barking back at the bigger ones of the foe. He got closer and closer every minute to point blank range, and something had to happen.

The Germans, at first, had had some difficulty in hitting the *Mary Rose*, but at so close a range nothing could now miss her. Fox put his helm over, no doubt with the intention of firing a torpedo, but a salvo of shells struck the ship amidships as he did so, and she was soon a blazing wreck, for although a destroyer has the minimum amount of woodwork on board, there is sufficient material to catch fire and cause serious damage. Even the paint on the funnels and bridge soon caught alight. Fox refused to surrender: the deck of the *Mary Rose* had become a perfect shambles, and guns and guns' crew complete had been blown to smithereens; only one gun was left with a few men to man it, as nearly all her crew were lying dead about her decks.

Fox turned in towards the enemy to fire a torpedo, his last chance, but he got so close, barely 2,000 yards, that the German cruisers were now firing at point blank range. The end came quickly; another salvo burst on the *Mary Rose*, and sent this gallant little ship to the bottom. Fox, seeing his ship was sinking, gave orders for each man to save himself as best he could. Fox himself was seen in the water, but not again; ten of his crew out of ninety-eight were saved and landed on the Norwegian coast.

The *Strongbow*, too, and most of the convoy were

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lost, but this was not for want of desperate courage on the part of the escorts. The enemy cruisers, though not officially classified as pirates, like the Algerians, yet sank the unarmed ships in the convoy without giving the crews a fair chance to get into the ships' boats. The trawlers saved as many lives as they could, and got them safely to harbour.

Fox had done all that lay in his power to save the convoy, and the *Mary Rose* had worthily upheld the honour of her name.

CHAPTER V

GENTLEMEN ALL

I

“MONMOUTH,” 1758

ONE of the most famous courts martial ever held was the one that tried Vice-Admiral of the Blue, the Hon. John Byng, for his failure in an action against a French fleet off Minorca on May 20th, 1756.

His flag captain at the time of the action was Captain Arthur Gardiner, and the leading and largest ship of the French Fleet was the *Foudroyante*, a fine ship of 84 guns.

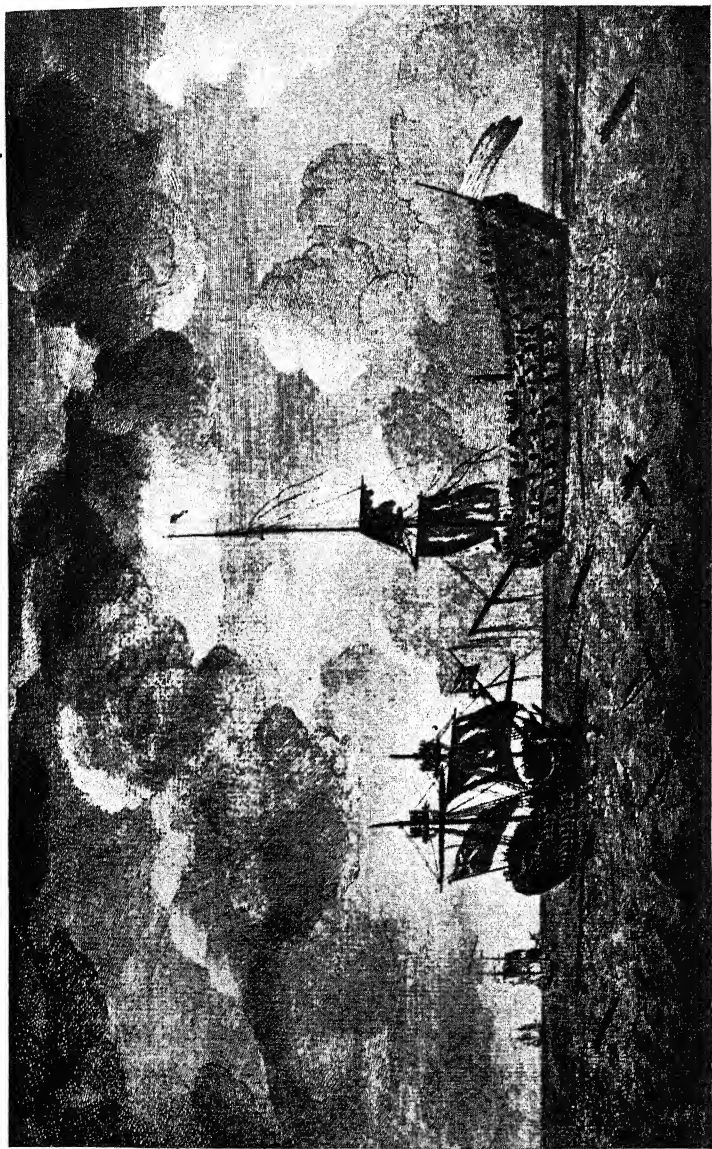
As a result of the court martial, Admiral Byng was shot at Spithead. The whole case is one of great interest, but this is not the time to relate it, beyond saying that it caused a great controversy at the time, even to the extent of being taken to the Houses of Parliament, and that Gardiner, who had given evidence at the court martial, was one of the many captains who thought the sentence on the Admiral very unfair: he must therefore have felt it very keenly when the execution took place. In the meantime the *Foudroyante* had

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become the pride of the French Navy, and Gardiner must have often thought to himself how he would like to have a scrap with her and try and get even. Some idea of revenge was no doubt in his mind, but how he was to achieve it was a different matter, as he commanded the *Monmouth* of 64 guns with a complement of 470 men, which would be no match for the *Foudroyante*, an 84-gun ship with roughly 1,000 men on board. The *Monmouth* belonged to a squadron commanded by Admiral Henry Osborn, which was busily engaged in blockading Cartagena, and trying to entice out the French fleet.

At daybreak on February 28th, 1758, when the squadron was off Cape de Gaba, they sighted several big enemy ships—they turned out to be four in all—to leeward. On being sighted, the French ships, which included the flagship *Foudroyante*, quickly scattered in all directions with the hopes of making good their escape. Admiral Osborn at once sent his fleet in pursuit, and by dusk three of the French ships had been brought to action, and had either been sunk or had hauled down their colours, but the *Foudroyante* had not yet been overtaken.

When the French ships had been first sighted; Gardiner had spotted the *Foudroyante*—now was his chance—and when the Admiral gave the order to chase, Gardiner had no eyes except for the *Foudroyante*. He at once set every stitch of canvas he could and pursued the *Foudroyante*; with him in the chase were the *Swiftsure* of 70 guns and the



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THE END OF THE "FOUDROYANTE"

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Hampton Court of 64 guns, so that if the three together could get up with the *Foudroyante*, everything would be in the favour of the British.

Gardiner had the ship with the best sailing qualities of the three and not bothering about the other two was soon ahead of them. By lowering some of his sails he might have reduced speed till they came up with him, but he boldly went ahead, knowing that single-handed he would be in for a big fight if he closed with the *Foudroyante*, yet determined that even if he could not destroy her himself, he would at least damage her so as to leave her unfit for further action, and delay her so as to give time for the ships of the Fleet to come up. He must have realised that he himself might be destroyed or sunk in the process ; but Gardiner had but one thought, and that was to make sure the *Foudroyante* was taken, even if he had to fight to the last man.

He mustered his crew and told them of his intentions so that they knew exactly what they were in for, and their spirits rose high when by dusk the *Monmouth* and *Foudroyante* were alone and fairly close together. Gardiner was now well ahead of his supporters and if he " took on " the *Foudroyante* the action would be over one way or the other before they could come up. He had still time to " fall back " on his supports, but he intended to get his teeth into the enemy and make sure of him.

Had he fallen back, as a man with less courage might well have done, the *Foudroyante* might, and

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in fact probably would, have escaped in the darkness.

The powers that be might well blame him in either case : if he went on and got destroyed, they would have said, " Why didn't he wait for his supports ? " ; if he waited for them and the enemy escaped, they would have said, " A more dashing man would have gone on." Similar situations have arisen before and since, and one's admiration must always go out to the man who casts his personal advantage aside for the common cause of helping in some way to interfere with the enemy—after all, that is a sailor's business in a war.

All these thoughts must have run through Gardiner's mind, but on he went, with his crew at the guns and he himself with one eye cast on the sails and the other on the enemy, to make sure that they got into action at the earliest possible second.

The admiral on the *Foudroyante* was no doubt a little amused at this cheeky British ship and was only too glad to get her so far ahead, by herself, as, when it suited him, he would be able to turn, and in a short time put her out of action. By 8 p.m. the action was at last imminent, and the *Foudroyante* turned to beat off her pursuer ; and with a broadside nearly twice as heavy, the French may have expected an easy task in crippling the *Monmouth* and getting away again before the other British ships arrived.

Gardiner was ready for the fray and when he saw the *Foudroyante* turn he realised that the greatest fight of his life was at hand. His long

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chase was at last rewarded, and his heart must have throbbed as the first broadsides were exchanged. Gardiner, standing on the poop as he took his ship into action, was practically the first to be wounded. Several of his officers rushed to his side to take him below, but Gardiner firmly refused to go. Making little of his wounds, he continued to urge his men on in this unequal duel. Stripped to the waist they were loading and firing their guns as fast as they could; in those days they had no mechanical means of loading, for firing their guns, it all had to be done by manual labour. Running the gun back, putting the shot in the muzzle, then ramming it home, after that, getting the gun out again so that the muzzle was clear of the port-hole—all took time, but the faster they did it the more chance they had of defeating this formidable enemy. Some of the *Foudroyante's* rigging was soon shot away, but Gardiner, a fine seaman as well as a gallant man, manœuvred his ship close under the quarter of the *Foudroyante*, and at close quarters the battle went on with great spirit on both sides—in the darkness there was little to be seen but the flashes of the guns, and it was impossible to estimate what damage was being done. The crew of the *Monmouth* were suffering many casualties, but the dead and wounded were dragged clear of the guns so as not to interfere with the loading and firing. It was realised that to defeat the *Foudroyante* would require every shot and ounce of powder in the ship, and the gunner had his hands full in keeping the supply going.

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About nine o'clock the gallant Gardiner received another wound in his head from a musket shot which proved to be mortal. He had done his job—to delay and if possible destroy the enemy—he could do no more. His last words were to exhort his men not to let go the enemy, and so this great sailor and gallant gentleman passed away in the heat of an action such as few men would have taken on.

He was a very popular captain, and the crew, staggered at the news of his wound, fought all the more desperately. The command of the ship fell on Lieutenant Carket, who continued the fight with the gallantry and skill of his captain, and swore he would never lower the *Monmouth's* colours—in fact, according to one report he is supposed to have taken a revolver in each hand personally to defend the flag. Suddenly finding himself in command was naturally a great responsibility, but he had his captain's great example and gallantry to live up to. Soon after he had taken command the *Monmouth's* mizzenmast came down with a run and the Frenchmen no doubt thought the action would soon be over, and a great cheer went up on board the *Foudroyante*—but they were a little premature, as the *Monmouth's* crew returned the compliment and a few minutes later the *Foudroyante's* mizzenmast was shot through and came down too. The gunners of the *Monmouth* were out to give as good as they got, and even go one better, as, not satisfied with the mizzenmast they brought down the mainmast as well, and

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these two shattered masts with their rigging straggling all over the place, greatly hampered the Frenchmen's fire.

The *Monmouth* fought gallantly on till after midnight, firing nearly every shot she had on board and expending some eighty barrels of powder. Soon after midnight the action died down because the shooting of the *Monmouth* had wrought such havoc on the decks of the *Foudroyante* and so many men had been killed that the remainder were beginning to leave their guns, and eventually the ship ceased firing. It is improbable that the French knew the *Monmouth* had practically fired the last shot from the locker, but in any case the *Foudroyante* was a doomed ship, for it was just about this time that the *Swiftsure* arrived on the scene. Captain Stanhope of the *Swiftsure* saw before him the extraordinary sight of the *Foudroyante* apparently knocked out by the much weaker *Monmouth*. He at once hailed the *Foudroyante* and asked the captain whether he had surrendered. The Frenchman replied with a few guns and some musketry shots. These were probably fired by a few stout hearts who wanted to go on to the end, as a few minutes later the *Foudroyante* surrendered. It seemed almost unbelievable that such a big ship with Admiral Duquesne, one of the finest admirals of the French Navy, should have been thus destroyed by such a comparatively small ship as the *Monmouth*.

The surrender of the *Foudroyante* was entirely due to Gardiner and his gallant crew of the

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Monmouth, although the *Swiftsure* was present at the end. It was only right that Lieutenant Carket was the officer who officially received the surrender and to whom the Frenchman handed his sword.

The *Monmouth* lost 28 killed and 79 wounded, whilst the *Foudroyante's* casualties amounted to 190.

Gardiner was dead, but it was his personality and spirit, backed up by a splendid crew, which had brought about a result which caused rejoicing throughout England and a certain amount of consternation in Paris.

The *Foudroyante* was taken into the British Navy and Lieutenant Carket was promoted to command of the ship he had captured. Carket lived to see many another fight, but unfortunately he was lost in a hurricane in the West Indies; otherwise no doubt he would have lived to have flown his flag as an Admiral of the Fleet.

This action is a model of what a determined captain and crew can do against a superiorly armed ship.

II

CORONEL, 1914

AT the outbreak of war in 1914 a number of German cruisers were scattered over the Seven Seas, the largest one being the *Goeben*, which had quite a romantic career in the Mediterranean; after her, the two next biggest were the *Scharnhorst*

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and *Gneisenau*, two large armoured cruisers belonging to the China Squadron and based on Tsingtau,* the port in China which Germany used as her naval base, and which she had strongly fortified. Japan, aided to some extent by British forces, succeeded in capturing Tsingtau, but the capture is a story by itself. We are concerned here with the cruisers which were normally based there and which, with other German cruisers, were scattered all over the Pacific Ocean, keeping the allied forces on the alert and bringing a great influence to bear on the arrangements made for the transport of the Australian troops. The cruisers concerned included not only the more heavily armed *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*, but also the light cruisers *Nurnberg*, *Dresden* and *Leipzig*, (all under the flag of Admiral von Spee) and between them they had become a menace to the allied shipping and coaling ports. No one knew exactly where they would turn up next. It was unlikely that they would concentrate in Chinese waters, owing to the strength of the Japanese Navy, so in spite of their short appearance in the South Sea Islands, it was anticipated that they would probably make for the South America trade, and even try and work their way home to Germany.

British, Japanese and French naval forces were all employed in trying to catch them—but, as the German force, if united, was quite a formidable squadron, endeavours had to be made to bring it

* The *Emden* also belonged to this squadron and the story of her career is told in another chapter.

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to action by a superior, or at least, an equal force. In the middle of October, it was known that Admiral von Spee was on the Chilean coast: Rear-Admiral Cradock, in command of a British squadron, had come down the South American coast and eventually through the Straits of Magellan. His squadron consisted of His Majesty's ship *Good Hope*, in which his flag flew, an armoured cruiser; another armoured cruiser, the *Monmouth*, the light cruiser *Glasgow*, the armed merchant ship *Otranto*, and an old slow battleship, the *Canopus*. A more mixed force for working as a unit in pursuit of a squadron of fast cruisers would be hard to conceive. The *Good Hope* was a twenty-five knot ship with two 9-inch guns and a big battery of 6-inch guns, the *Monmouth* somewhat slower with only 6-inch guns, the *Glasgow*, a light cruiser of about 26 knots, the *Otranto* of 16 knots, a merchant ship totally unarmoured, and never built to fight, but with a few small guns placed aboard her after the outbreak of war; and finally, as a sort of afterthought the Admiralty had thrown in the *Canopus*, an old battleship of about 15 knots though only good for 12, but certainly with guns of the 12-inch type, much heavier than anything the German cruisers had, and no doubt of great value if the Germans were foolish enough to get within range of them. In considering speeds one has always to remember that a "designed" speed is not always the speed a ship is capable of at any given time. Age, and length of time out of dock are two important factors.

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Cradock, no doubt, would have felt more at ease if he had had a homogeneous squadron, but the inadequacy of his forces was more than counter-balanced by his own spirit, which included infinite courage and dash—like that of the admirals of our old-time wars.

On the afternoon of November 1st, 1914, Cradock was with his squadron, except the *Canopus*, steaming in a northerly direction not far from the Chilean coast. The *Canopus* was nearly three hundred miles astern, escorting some colliers. Unlike the days of Nelson, when ships could remain at sea for almost an indefinite period, we were now living in a time when ships depended on coal for high speed, and not on wind, and the faster a ship wished to go the more coal she consumed, with the result that an admiral in command had to be constantly thinking of how, when and where he could be sure of getting further coal supplies—so that colliers (which were generally very slow and unarmed ships) required special consideration.

Cradock had already sent the *Glasgow* to the Chilean port of Coronel to collect, and send telegrams, and he himself had arranged to meet her again about fifty miles from the harbour. He had his squadron spread over a stretch of fifteen miles on the look-out for the enemy, as he had reason, thanks to wireless, to believe that at least one enemy cruiser was in the vicinity. It so happened that Von Spee also had suspicions of the *Glasgow* being in the vicinity and he too had his squadron spread with a view to catching her.

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At 4.20 p.m. the *Glasgow* and then the *Otranto* sighted smoke, and in a very few minutes it was obvious that the smoke did not come from just one cruiser, but from a squadron. When Cradock received the report he no doubt realised that he was probably up against a superior force. What was he to do? He could fall back on the *Canopus* or avoid action till she joined him. He probably realised that, if he attacked a superior force, and failed, the powers that be would no doubt say he ought to have made use of the old *Canopus*: if he succeeded—well! Many thoughts must have passed through Cradock's mind, as in the case of Gardiner. He had to sum up a lot of things quickly, for instance the sea that was running would make it difficult to use the guns on the lower deck with any degree of efficiency, if at all; then again the evening was coming on, and the sunset in that part of the world is such as to give a great advantage to one side or another, owing to the glow it sets up in the sky. He knew he had no superiority of speed so as to be able to choose his own position for fighting, if he intended to fight, for the *Scharnhorst* and the *Gneisenau* were much the same speed as the *Good Hope*, and their armament was somewhat superior—and they were also the "crack" gunnery ships in the German Navy, whereas the *Good Hope* and *Monmouth* had had little time to do much target practice. The *Otranto* could not be looked on as a fighting unit. These and other thoughts must have quickly passed through his mind; there was one thing he knew definitely,

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and that was that a quick decision on his part was essential.

In his squadron was the *Monmouth*, and perhaps this made him think of Gardiner. Be this as it may, he was too gallant an admiral to turn his back on the foe. He decided to fight, no doubt with the thought, "Well, if I can't sink the enemy I can so damage him that someone else will, and if we get lost in the attempt, our sacrifice will not be in vain."

Admiral Cradock thereupon formed his squadron in line ahead and hoisted his battle flags. The flagship *Good Hope* was leading the line; at the foremast was Cradock's flag, a red St. George's cross with a big red ball on each of the two inner squares; at the mainmast and peak were flying the White Ensign, also containing the red cross of St. George, but with the Union Jack in the top corner.

The crews were summoned to their quarters, and the guns run out ready for instant action, the ammunition supplies were kept ready so that the guns could be quickly fired with the ammunition which came from the bowels of the ship, the stokers were stoking up all the furnaces ready for "full speed" whenever the admiral wanted it, and the doctors were busy making their last preparations in their temporary "hospitals" should they be required. There was little time to spare, as the enemy was only twelve miles distant and Cradock was heading to cross their bow, but the *Otranto* was a slow ship and handicapped Cradock

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in his manœuvre, so that he was obliged to alter his course and close the enemy on parallel courses. It is not quite clear why Cradock did not order the *Otranto* away on first sighting the enemy ; it may have been over-confidence, or possibly he thought she would be useful after the light cruisers had been disabled. His force was so small that it is not altogether surprising that he did not want to reduce it any more by deliberately losing a ship which might possibly be of use.

And what of Von Spee ? He must have been just as surprised as Cradock at finding himself up against several ships, instead of just the *Glasgow* as he expected. Von Spee had no harbour to fall back on if his ships were damaged, and also he knew that, sooner or later, he would have to face a superior force. So he, too, had many things to think of in a few minutes, like Cradock ; and like him he also formed his squadron in line ahead, and then he evidently intended to make the best use he could of the weather conditions and oncoming sunset, for at first he seemed to be trying to avoid action as he edged his squadron away, whilst Cradock must have been anxious to get on with it, as for the time being the advantage of light was on his side : as the evening closed in, he would lose it.

Soon after six o'clock Cradock, leading his squadron at seventeen knots, turned slightly towards the enemy. The *Otranto* could not keep up, and realising she was of little fighting value, hauled out of the line. Admiral von Spee kept

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postponing the action till the light was in his favour, a very good manœuvre on his part, when one thinks of the thousands of miles he was from Germany or, for that matter, from any German naval base, and although he could rely on a reasonable time in Chilean harbours, yet, if his squadron were seriously damaged, he would have little chance of being able to do any further damage for his country, and more than that, he knew he would at once release dozens of cruisers and other ships for war purposes elsewhere.

It was not till seven o'clock, just after the sun had set, and when the British ships were showing up well against the afterglow, that the action commenced. The Germans opened fire when some six miles distant, and the *Good Hope* soon received her first hit, this being quickly followed by several on the *Monmouth*. The British ships were out-matched, but they stubbornly returned the fire, knowing full well that it would probably be the end of them, but thinking they had time to damage the enemy first. As the light failed, the disadvantage to our ships increased, because the enemy were hard to see and the shots could not be spotted. Both in the *Good Hope* and *Monmouth* the main batteries of 6-inch guns were on the maindeck, not very much above the water-line, and with the sea that was running, not only would the waves splash into the gun ports and interfere with the loading, but worse still, the spray would dull the telescope lenses which the gunlayers used to lay the guns by.

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The fight went on, each side anxious to score a winning hit. In ships of this class there was always a chance that just one lucky shell might blow a whole ship up. This actually happened at the Battle of Jutland when a shell caused a flash to pass down to the magazines.

The *Monmouth* received more damage than the others, so that she had to haul slightly out of the line. Fires broke out in her afterpart, and no sooner were these subdued, than others broke out on her forecastle. Although everything is done on board a ship to reduce the chances of fire, there is always bound to be a lot of inflammable material left. The most dangerous are the boxes of cordite which stand ready by the guns ; then there is the wooden deck itself, the wooden boats, the tables and stools on the mess decks, or the furniture in the captain's cabin and officers' messes, and in all a hundred and one things.

In the meantime the squadrons had been gradually closing each other, and although the *Good Hope* was on fire in many places, Cradock continued to lead his squadron gallantly on until his ship was less than three miles from the enemy. At 7.30 p.m. the enemy was seen edging away, but crippled as the *Good Hope* was by this time, Cradock turned towards them in a last desperate attempt to destroy them. He probably had hopes of using torpedoes, and to do this with any chance of success he would need to get in close. As she did so, a bigger fire than ever broke out on board the *Good Hope*, and Cradock and

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his men can have had little doubt that they were doomed.

Darkness had now crept on, and at 7.45 the *Good Hope* began to lose speed, no doubt owing to damage in the boiler-rooms—who knows? A few minutes later a great explosion took place on board the *Good Hope* and the flames from her leapt skyhigh. She ceased firing and was seen no more. Cradock had fought a great fight against great odds and had gone down in his flagship with his flag proudly flying, taking with him a thousand officers and men. But what of the other ships?

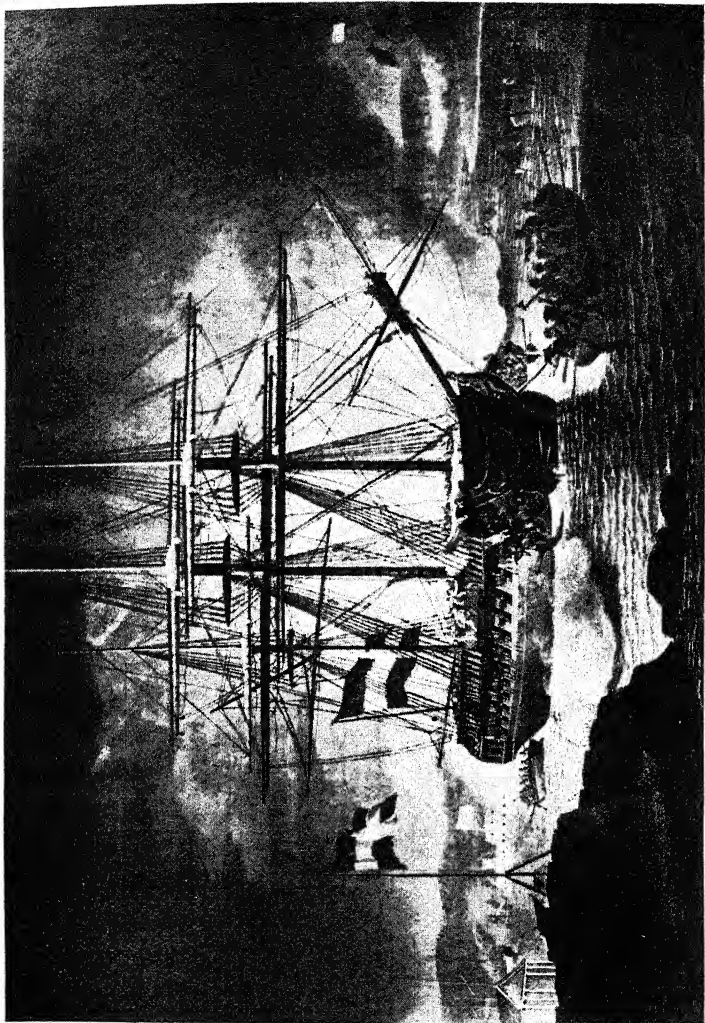
By eight o'clock, and it was now pitch dark, there was little to be seen. The *Monmouth* had moved away to the westward, and after extinguishing her fires, had been lost to view by the Germans. The *Glasgow* had followed her round and came upon her with her bows well down in the water, and obviously trying to get her stern towards the sea. It would appear that she had been holed in the fore part of the ship and was manœuvring so as to prevent the seas breaking on board her. The *Glasgow* kept close to her till, in the moonlight, she saw the enemy again approaching. There was nothing more to be done; it was only by an Act of God that she herself had survived the action, and so now she made off with the *Otranto* to report what had happened. The *Monmouth* was left alone.

Captain Brandt in command of her refused to think of surrender. The German cruiser *Nurnberg* found the *Monmouth* about 9 p.m. in a terribly

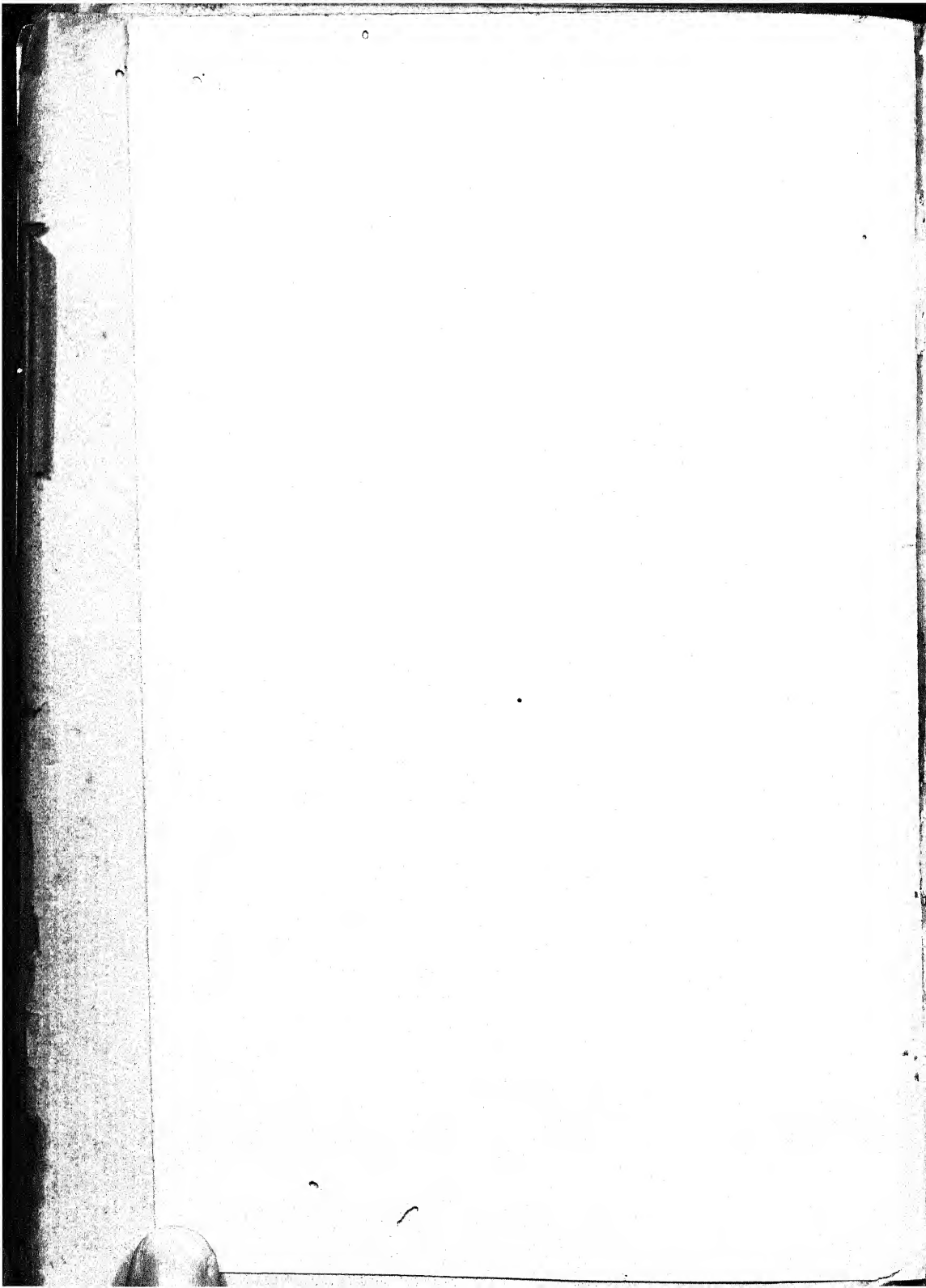
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crippled condition. It was obvious that she could not last much longer, but the *Nurnberg* had been sent to finish her off, if necessary, with torpedoes. The White Ensign could still be seen flying aloft on the crippled *Monmouth*. The *Nurnberg* was therefore obliged to open fire but, after a few rounds, ceased for a while to give her a chance of surrendering, which she quite honourably might have done ; but Brandt, or whoever was now in command, refused to do so. The *Nurnberg* had no option but to reopen fire, till eventually the *Monmouth* capsized with her colours still flying.

Not a soul from the *Good Hope* or *Monmouth* was saved, but the name of Cradock and his brave crews will long remain honoured in the annals of the Navy.



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"HERMIONE" BEING CUT OUT



CHAPTER VI

CUTTING OUT

1799

MUTINIES have from time to time taken place in nearly every Navy. Some are recorded in history owing to the effect they may have had on the political events of the time, or even owing to the effect they may have had on history itself. There is no intention now of writing on the subject of mutinies, though many of them are of great interest. The story to be related here is one of the many "cutting out" expeditions which fill the pages of our naval histories. It was one of the most dare-devil of these adventures, which always involved much risk, and gave young officers and men an opportunity of displaying great courage.

The extra daring displayed here was due to the fact that the ship to be "cut out" had belonged to the British Navy. The *Hermione* was one of the British Fleet in the West Indies, but in September, 1797, the crew, owing to discontent, decided to mutiny, and after overpowering their officers, took the ship to La Guayra and turned her over to the Spaniards. The British flag was hauled down and the Spanish flag was hoisted.

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Endeavours were made to persuade the Spaniards to hand the ship back again but without success ; in fact, they took extra precautions to safeguard her, as they knew that every British ship of the West Indies Fleet would be anxious to recapture her if possible.

Serving on the station at that time was Captain Edward Hamilton, a man who had gone to sea with his father when only seven years old—in fact, it was not till after he had served at sea for a couple of years that he went to school. He had the love of the sea in his bones, and on his return to the Navy was very soon promoted to the rank of Commander, after which he greatly distinguished himself in the wars towards the end of the eighteenth century—the list of engagements when he captured or sank enemy vessels is too long to relate in detail.

Hamilton was not a man to have much sympathy with mutiny ; in fact, he was undoubtedly a bit of a martinet ; and one can realise that he was as keen as anyone on the station to recapture the *Hermione* and make some amends for the murderous mutiny which had taken place aboard her, and to restore her to the British Navy.

October 21st is a day easy to remember because of its associations with the Battle of Trafalgar, but other events of naval interest have occurred from time to time on this date. It was on October 21st that Hamilton evolved in his mind the scheme of cutting out the *Hermione* from Puerto Cabello, Havana. He was at this time in command of the

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frigate *Surprise* of 32 guns, and he discovered the *Hermione* in a presumably safe anchorage in Puerto Cabello, covered by strong batteries on either side of the harbour. The batteries between them mounted at best 150 guns of all sizes, and, moored as she was head and stern, it would be almost a superhuman task to cut her out. The Spaniards had apparently, taken every precaution to keep their ill-gained prize, as the *Hermione* was seen to have her sails bent ready for getting under way at a moment's notice.

Hamilton, without expressing any opinion to his officers, kept the *Surprise* beating up and down off Havana. One can see him pacing his poop, glancing every now and then at the *Hermione*, and weighing to himself the pros and cons as to whether it would be possible to seize a ship under the very nose of the enemy. Strictly speaking, it was impossible, but then, "Nothing ventured, nothing done," and eventually, after thorough consideration, on the 24th he decided he would attempt the impossible, so, mustering his crew, he propounded to them his intentions, and told them that he had (as far as he could foresee) every detail worked out, and that he would lead them himself.

He had little need to call for volunteers as all hands were keen as mustard to get the *Hermione* back—the very sight of her lying in a Spanish port with some three hundred Spaniards on board as her crew, was enough to make their mouths water.

Hamilton had arranged to use six boats ; in fact, practically all he had available, and the boats were

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to be divided into two divisions. Each officer in charge of a boat was given the most minute instructions as to exactly what he and his crew had to do. As soon as they received their instructions from Hamilton, everyone on board was busily occupied getting everything ready. Muskets, cutlasses, ammunition, lanterns, and a dozen other things had to be mustered.

The weather on the evening of October 24th seemed suitable for the attempt. Soon after seven, Hamilton gave orders for the boats to be hoisted out and manned by the men told off for the service, and loaded with the necessary equipment which had already been assembled. When all the boats and their crews (which totalled in all about 100 men) were ready, Hamilton himself stepped into his boat. As already stated, the boats had been arranged in two divisions, and Hamilton led one of them.

Before leaving the *Surprise*, Hamilton gave orders for the ship to remain ready to support the boats if, and when, required. Hamilton's orders to the various boats' officers had been so complete that he had nothing to add except, "shove off," and "in case of separation the rendezvous is the quarter-deck of the *Hermione*." Hamilton had arranged that his division should have the more dangerous job of the two, namely, to do the actual boarding and fighting, whereas the other one was detailed to cut the *Hermione's* cables and then tow her out of harbour. All this was to be done under the very nose of the shore batteries.

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Hamilton had taken the precaution of taking his spy-glass with him, and his keen eye was for ever turned on the *Hermione* as he led his boats with the greatest precision. The boats, which were heavily laden, had a long and dreary pull ashore, and from time to time the crews had to rest on their oars in order not to overtax their energies, which had to be preserved for the *coup de grâce*. No talking in the boats could be allowed as it was essential to success that the attack should be a complete surprise. It was to be expected that the soldiers in the forts would be on the alert, and that the *Hermione* would have some sort of guard boat on patrol outside the harbour.

It was nearly midnight before the boats were actually entering the harbour, and they were less than a mile from the *Hermione* when, as bad luck would have it, they bumped right into a guard boat which belonged to her. The guard boat was eventually driven back, but they were unable to prevent her giving the alarm. No preparations could have been made to deal with this particular contingency, but once the alarm was given, there is little doubt that Hamilton expressed himself very forcibly on the subject of guard boats and this one in particular. The result of the alarm was that the guns' crews on the *Hermione*, who were sleeping round their guns, at once opened fire. Secrecy had now been further denied to Hamilton, but he and his boats pushed on, for they were not to be deterred by anything of this sort, and as

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the boats were in complete darkness, they were not much of a target for the gunners.

Hamilton led his own boats straight for the *Hermione*, cheering as he went, and hoping all the boats would follow him, but this alarm had upset matters a little for some of the boats delayed to attack the guard boats.

For a full half-hour the boats had to run the gauntlet of the fire from the *Hermione*, but Hamilton pushed on, and with words of encouragement to his men, who were by this time getting rather done, he got alongside the *Hermione*, close under the forecastle. There was a bit of a mix-up here as some of the oars of the boat got foul of the *Hermione's* moorings, which delayed matters for several minutes. History doesn't relate what was said in the boat, but perhaps it is just as well. One can picture Hamilton aching to get on board and then finding the sailors delaying things in this fashion, oars being broken or vain attempts made to pull them clear. It was surprising that the Spaniards did not seize the opportunity of pouring down shot into the boat. Anyhow, all's well that ends well, and eventually Hamilton, together with his Gunner, Mr. John Maxwell, and about ten men, leapt on board the forecastle of the *Hermione* and without much difficulty gained possession of it. It turned out that the crew of the *Hermione* were at their quarters on the main deck and apparently did not know that Hamilton and his party had boarded over the bows.

Almost at the same time as Hamilton got on

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board—so well organised was the affair, in spite of the fracas with the guard boats and the delay over the moorings—another boat ran alongside the opposite side of the *Hermione*, and the crew, dashing on board, soon joined their Captain.

Hamilton decided now he had sufficient men to capture the ship, and dividing his forces, he moved aft on either side. The Spaniards attempted to stop them, and a heavy fight, often hand-to-hand, took place. Hamilton remembered the rendezvous (the quarter-deck), but not so all the others, or perhaps circumstances prevented them from reaching it, and Hamilton found himself at one time surrounded by several Spaniards and felled by a blow from the butt end of a musket. Luckily, several of his men saw the occurrence, and arrived on the scene in a few minutes to render assistance. In the meantime the Gunner also, had received a bad wound and, for the time, was knocked out.

The fight was of a most desperate nature, as all hand-to-hand fights must always be: when two men, at close quarters, set about trying to kill each other, the affair is bound to be desperate. It looked at one time as if the Spaniards would overpower Hamilton's few men (about 14) when, after about a quarter of an hour, just as things were looking exceedingly grim, and Hamilton did not know how much longer he could hold on, reinforcements, including marines, arrived from the other boats—none too soon, for Hamilton had already received several nasty wounds. The marines didn't waste much time in clearing things

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up. Collecting together, under their gallant leader, they fired a volley at the Spaniards and then, charging with fixed bayonets, they drove a good number of the enemy head over heels below, so that there was nothing left for the Spaniards to do but surrender—the marines taking the useful precaution of locking them down below, as there were still a number on deck to contend with ; but these, too, were soon overpowered.

Hamilton, although possibly disappointed that the affair had not worked out exactly as he had arranged, yet knew that the other division of boats would be doing their part of the job, and sure enough, just about the time the reinforcements arrived, easing his own situation, the other boats had succeeded in cutting the cables—the carpenter of the ship being responsible for cutting those at the stern. The *Hermione* was now adrift from her moorings, and Hamilton, wounded though he was, must have given a sigh of relief as he saw his desperate enterprise at least within reasonable distance of success.

But all was not over yet. The boats of the *Surprise* soon took the *Hermione* in tow, whilst Hamilton, with most of the Spaniards safely below, was now virtually in charge of the ship, although he had to order a few shots to be fired down between decks, as the Spaniards were not entirely subdued and also there was the chance of a few desperate ones attempting to blow the ship up.

In the meantime, some of the hands were sent aloft to loosen the sails, so as to make sail and

Cutting Out. 1799

assist the boats towing. Gradually, much to Hamilton's relief, the *Hermione* slowly gathered way towards the harbour's mouth.

The Spaniards, seeing the game was up, ceased firing and even asked for terms ; no doubt the answer was short and to the point.

As the *Hermione* started to move, the forts, which up till now had been silent—possibly so as not to damage friend as well as foe—opened fire. The *Hermione* was not able to reply, and even if she could have done, it would have been of little avail ; even if the crew had been thoroughly organised and knew the “run of the ship,” as has been seen elsewhere, the chances of doing any damage to the forts would have been infinitesimal. No great damage was done by the bombardment, but one shot struck the *Hermione* below the water-line and the pumps had to be manned to keep the water under. Another shot damaged the main-mast rigging, which was unfortunate as, with the heavy swell usually met with off Cuba, it gave some anxiety as to the safety of the mast itself.

By 2 a.m. the deed had been done : the *Hermione* was out of gunshot, and by a brilliant bit of daring and courage she was once more under the British flag.

The boats engaged in towing were called alongside and some of the men who had helped so much towards the success were summoned on board—they must have felt a certain amount of joy at stepping on board the *Hermione* for the first time.

She was taken to Port Royal, Jamaica, and

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renamed *Retaliation* ; but this name was considered—and rightly so—undesirable, so that on her eventually reaching England she was renamed the *Retribution*.

The British losses were small compared with those of the Spaniards—only 10 men wounded against 119 killed and 97 wounded. Hamilton, the inspirer of this great enterprise, suffered most : he was wounded no less than four times, apart from the bruises and cuts that were to be expected from such an action. For his very gallant services in one of the most daring enterprises of this sort ever recorded, he was knighted, and Mr. Maxwell, the Gunner, received a very unique honour, namely, a sword, presented to him by the Lieutenants of the ship.

CHAPTER VII

CARRYING DESPATCHES

“LEANDER AND LE GÉNÉREUX,” 1798

EVERYONE is acquainted with the famous Battle of the Nile which was fought on August 1st, 1798, when Nelson gained one of his great sea victories over the French Fleet. One might well have imagined that on its conclusion there was no more immediate fighting to be done. The French Fleet had been destroyed, India saved, and so great was the victory gained that Nelson was made a Peer and innumerable rewards were given to all his fleet, all tending to remind one of the greatness and importance of one of the most famous sea fights of this country.

But great as was the victory, it had not prevented a French ship, *Le Généreux*, escaping, and she turned up again in a rather unpleasant fashion.

After the great battle Nelson sent his despatches reporting the action to Lord St. Vincent, the Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean, by Captain Berry, who was ordered to take passage in the *Leander*, a small battleship of 50 guns, commanded by Captain Thompson. All reports

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in those days had to be written in longhand, and for this, and other reasons it was August 6th before the *Leander* sailed. It was a great honour to all on board to be carrying such famous despatches, and a quiet voyage was no doubt expected.

Imagine Thompson's concern when, soon after daylight, on August 18th, off Candia, they unexpectedly sighted a sail which was evidently a large man-of-war. Thompson did not particularly want a fight whilst on this important mission, unless it had been with some small frigate or similar vessel. But watching the sail now, he realised it belonged to some ship much bigger, and the safety of the despatches must have been his first thought. There is little doubt he would have wished it otherwise. As the ship approached, Thompson realised that she was obviously superior to the *Leander* in size, guns and complement, and when he discovered it was *Le Généreux* of 74 guns, the ship that had escaped at the Nile, he must have been desperately keen to take her on. What a great thing it would have been to complete the destruction of the whole French Fleet. He would not have much of a chance against such a superior ship, but carrying important despatches was a point which weighed with him most; he also had other things to consider, for instance, the crew of the *Leander* had been greatly depleted, as many men had been left behind to act as prize-crews for the vessels captured at the Nile, and there were many wounded men still on board.

Carrying Despatches

Taking everything into consideration, it was Thompson's duty to avoid an action — but could he do so? The *Leander* had poor sailing qualities, and unless he could get a good start, it would be difficult for her to escape. The breeze that morning was tricky, and although it was filling the sails of the stranger, the *Leander* was almost becalmed.

It soon became obvious to Thompson that he would have to fight an action or surrender, and so the difficult complex problem was settled for him, and when he saw that an action must take place he decided to put up as good a fight as he could and handled his ship so as to get every possible advantage. The *Leander's* men were called to action, and, with their sleeves rolled up, they waited in readiness for the fray. Even those who were wounded, except the most dangerous cases, joined up with the guns' crews ready to give a hand.

About 8 a.m. *Le Généreux* had come up so speedily with the breeze that she was within gun-shot, and Thompson, having decided on action, shortened sail to allow her to come closer. It was only now that *Le Généreux* hoisted her national colours, having approached under neutral colours, an old and legitimate *ruse de guerre*, which has frequently been effective, and is referred to in several other stories; but on this occasion it is doubtful if Thompson had been deceived.

Soon after 9 a.m. the first shot was fired by *Le*

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Généreux, and the *Leander* at once replied with every gun that could be brought to bear. Up till this period *Le Généreux* had had all the advantage of the breeze, but now it had caught the *Leander*, too, and the two ships moved slowly onwards with the wind, whilst broadside was given for broadside, much the same as in the case of the *Nymphe* and *Cléopâtre*. A close and furious action ensued, and the heavier armament of the *Le Généreux* soon began to have its effect, with the result that the *Leander* in a very short time had her sails and rigging badly torn. All the time the two ships were getting closer and closer to each other. Thompson realised that sooner or later *Le Généreux* would attempt to board him, and there appeared nothing he could do to avoid it ; he could only be ready to repel the boarders with every available man, and trust to being able to overpower the superior numbers. With his sails hanging loose, and his rigging severed in many places, there was no chance of escape, but that was no reason for not putting up a good fight. About ten-thirty *Le Généreux* saw a chance to fall alongside her opponent, as by this time the *Leander* was no longer manageable. The French captain at once sought to take the advantage and steered to lay alongside the *Leander*, dropping down on her with a rending crash, whilst Thompson calmly stood and waited the blow, trusting his men to use their weapons to good advantage. The officer who normally commanded the marines had been killed on a previous occasion, so that the marines were under

Carrying Despatches

the orders of the sergeant, a non-commissioned officer.*

• As the boarding party attempted to clamber on board, the marines, armed with muskets, repelled them with heavy loss, whilst the guns on the main deck continued to keep up a hot fire. Although the French crew were so greatly superior in numbers, yet each time they attempted to board the *Leander* they were repelled by the marines and seamen. Thompson, himself gallantly spurring his men on, was soon wounded, but he and all hands had realised they were in for a tough fight, and the fact that no actual boarding took place is evidence enough of their great courage and well-disciplined defence. So fierce was the fight, that out of the *Leander's* crew of about a hundred and eighty, nearly half were killed or wounded, whilst *Le Généreux* had about three hundred casualties out of a crew of probably a thousand.

Whilst the action was at its hottest, a fresh breeze sprang up, so that *Le Généreux*, with her less damaged sails forged ahead and was carried clear. Just at this time, misfortune overtook the *Leander*, as with a thud down came the mizzen-mast and her foretopmast, the wreckage from both

* For many years soldiers had served on board ships of war and in 1664 the Admiralty received authority to form "The Duke of York and Albany's Regiment of Foot," a regiment of land soldiers specially trained for sea service, and amongst the privileges they received was that of being allowed to march through London with fixed bayonets. In 1755 the Marine corps was formed, more or less on its present basis, being granted the title "Royal" for its distinguished war services in 1802, the badge of the corps is the Globe and Laurel with the name Gibraltar and the motto *Per Mare Per Terram*. The badge, the name and the motto, combine in a very concise form the part the Marines have played all over the world by sea and by land, at all times earning their laurels, and nowhere more so than at the capture of Gibraltar.

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masking the fire of many of Thompson's guns ; but, with much cunning, he laid his ship to pass under the enemy's stern, and from this position he was able to get in some broadsides without retaliation, and inflicted great damage on the crowded decks of *Le Généreux*.

The advantage was only temporary. The wind was still very light, and the two ships, unable to get away from each other even if they wanted to, continued to fight at very close range, and the masts of the *Leander* were receiving still more damage. Throughout the afternoon they continued at it hammer and tongs, the *Leander* still sustaining greater damage than her opponent. About 3.30 p.m., a puff of wind enabled *Le Généreux* to come across the *Leander's* bows, when the tables were reversed, and *Le Généreux* was able to pour in a broadside, whilst the crew of the *Leander* could not get their guns to bear owing to the wreckage which was now hanging around in all directions. Every mast had by this time gone, and Thompson was no longer able to handle his ship, though in spite of his many wounds, he was still carrying on.

Now, however, he had to make a great decision : whether to go on further with the struggle or not. To go on meant losing every man in the ship and probably the ship itself. Under certain circumstances such a thing is justified, and in others, not. Lying on his deck, bleeding from his wounds, Thompson, realising that further resistance was useless, reluctantly agreed to surrender, but

Carrying Despatches

not till the *Leander's* colours had been shot away.

Thompson had by now hung on for over six hours, much longer than one would have expected, and as neither ship had any boats left, the boatswain of *Le Généreux* swam over to the *Leander* to take her as a prize, and as such she was taken to Corfu.

The French officers do not appear to have acted in a very generous manner to so gallant a foe, and the French captain tried to persuade some of the prisoners to join the French Navy, but the gallantry of this action is sufficient for us to realise that the crew was not made of that sort of stuff, and no wonder that one of them replied, "No, you damned rascal, give us back our little ship and we'll fight you again."

In due course Captain Thompson was tried by court martial, and not only was he acquitted, but congratulated on his gallant defence, which reflected the highest honour upon all, and he was also knighted; and this action, although unsuccessful, will always stand high in the annals of the Navy—a remark which has, with justice, been so frequently used in connection with sea actions—though unfortunately ships do not carry colours, like a regiment on which can be inscribed their various honourable distinctions and actions.

CHAPTER VIII

AN ELUSIVE FOE

THE " EMDEN "

1914

It is always the case in every war, that some particular ship or captain becomes notorious, and the Great War was no exception. The German cruiser *Emden*, and her captain, Von Müller, whose mother happened to be an English woman, were known to everybody in England, and were the object of a good deal of admiration, though both of them were a source of grave anxiety during the first few months of the war.

The outbreak of war found most of the warships of all nations fitted with wireless, but comparatively few merchant ships, with the result that a merchant ship might be captured or sunk without being able to send out an S.O.S. The first suspicion of such a disaster having happened would be her non-arrival in harbour. On the other hand, as soon as men-of-war or shore stations got news of an event, it could be quickly sent through the ether from one ship or station to another. It must be remembered that merchant ships run more or less to a time-table, and if a ship was due in a port on

An Elusive Foe—The “Emden,” 1914

a certain day, it would be unlikely that wind or weather would delay her for more than forty-eight hours. If a ship did not arrive then, there was always the chance that some accident might have overtaken her, or another “ocean mystery” recorded. But, when two or three ships did not arrive when expected on a certain day, and then a fourth, due at the same time, arrived and reported “calm voyage,” the matter was different, and one could only imagine that an enemy cruiser was the cause.

All these facts must be borne in mind when we think of the very efficient, and at the same time humane way, Captain von Müller eluded our forces for three months. The cruiser *Emden* belonged to the German squadron stationed in the Far East, and its base was Tsingtau.* The war came on so suddenly that no concentration of either the British or German forces in the Far East was possible, and Von Müller, knowing that British cruisers would be soon watching the harbour of Tsingtau, slipped out and got away first.

Being careful himself not to send out any wireless messages, he was equally careful to intercept all the messages he could, and thereby got some intelligence of who was trying to catch him and also their whereabouts. In fact, he was hearing whilst not being heard, and on his way south through the China Seas, he passed many a British man-of-war and had many narrow shaves, but

* See Chapter V.

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fortune was on his side and he eluded any contact, though he would have liked to have taken on some of the liners which he knew had been fitted out as cruisers ; and eventually he joined his Admiral, Von Spee, from whom he received fresh instructions.

Although modern cruisers have many advantages over the old frigates, yet they also have disadvantages. Had the *Emden* been an old-time frigate her water supply and provisions would have been the chief consideration in determining how long she could keep the sea. But although the *Emden* was perhaps independent of the weather for where she went, she had to depend on coal for how long she could steam, and for the speed at which she could travel. She had no coaling stations, so at first sight it might appear that her capture would become an easy matter, and one only of time, if nothing else, as she had a coal supply for only a week or so.

War was declared on August 4th, 1914, yet on September 4th there was no news of the *Emden*. No one had seen her, and no one knew where she was. British, Japanese, French and Russian ships were spread all over the seas looking for her. One fairly definite conclusion could be reached, and that was that Captain von Müller had arranged his own coal supply with his own colliers, either taken to sea with him from Tsingtau or captured ; or else, as happened to another cruiser, she had accidentally or intentionally been blown up and abandoned. There was no news of her from any

An Elusive Foe—The “*Emden*,” 1914

neutral port, so she obviously had not been interned, a method sometimes adopted by men-of-war to escape capture. The chances on the whole were that she was at sea somewhere, but where, was the problem.

In the meantime, telegraph lines were busy, wireless was sending messages directing unseen ships to go this way and that way to find the *Emden*. She might be hiding somewhere in the East Indian Islands, where the neutral Dutch harbours might give some security; these must be searched. She might be going to the South Sea Islands—the Australian Squadron must be on the look-out! She might be going across the Pacific—the ships on the American coast must be made ready!

Day after day went by and still there was “nothing to report.” The search continued, and merchant ships, on tracks where the *Emden* was likely to be, took special precautions, such as proceeding without lights at night, and not following the normal peace-time routes. In the meantime, the *Emden* might well have been a Mystery Ship, or, better still, a Phantom Ship.

On September 14th, the wireless operator at Calcutta, with thoughts far removed from the *Emden*, as one place she could not be in would be the Indian Ocean, nearly jumped off his chair when he received a tick, tick, tick to say a German cruiser was in the Bay of Bengal. This must be the *Emden*, and no doubt Von Müller had had his agents in India to help him.

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Wireless and telegraphic communications could not work fast enough to convey the news to all the British Commanders-in-Chief, the merchant ships with wireless, the harbour masters to warn ships, to Admiralties, etc., and it seemed that everybody must be told. Allied cruisers were sent hither and thither, and the troops coming from overseas from India and Australia must be extra well guarded and take special routes; in fact a stir went through everyone in a position of responsibility, and each wondered what the next report would be.

The *Emden* was now roughly located, a net would be drawn round her, and she would be trapped. But Von Müller thought otherwise. He had courage, imagination, ingenuity, and with it all, a humane heart. Knowing that one of the neutral ships which had seen him off Rangoon would be sure to report his presence, he disappeared. It would have been an easy matter for Von Müller to have destroyed the neutral ship and continued to conceal his whereabouts, but he was careful to conform to the International Rules of war, both written and unwritten.

Ships were hurrying and scurrying in all directions to catch the *Emden* in the trap, but days and days went by, and still no further news came. Surely the *Emden* must have left the Indian waters. The inhabitants of Madras were thinking of going to bed as usual on the night of September 22nd, when they were alarmed by the sound of firing, and by seeing shells falling in the town. It was

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the *Emden* bobbing up once more and lying quietly off the town to try and destroy the oil tanks, or possibly the head-quarters of the Eastern Telegraph Company, as Madras was one of the centres used for passing and receiving much information. The *Emden's* stay off the town was short, because, as soon as she opened fire, the soldiers ashore quickly manned the rather antiquated guns of the defences and, with the aid of searchlights, as it was pitch dark, they promptly replied to the *Emden's* fire. But the *Emden's* visit, although it did little damage, caused a good deal of panic amongst the natives, who rushed in their thousands to the railway station in order to get out of the town and go inland as quickly as they could.

Surely, now the *Emden* could easily be caught after this great show of boldness in attacking a harbour which up to now had almost felt itself out of the war area except for the assembling of ships, and as a centre of communication.

The search for the *Emden* became more intense, more diversions of ships took place, and further alterations in the programme of troop convoys. In the meantime, she quietly sank ships at the very gates of our base in Colombo, always arranging for the safety of the people on board.

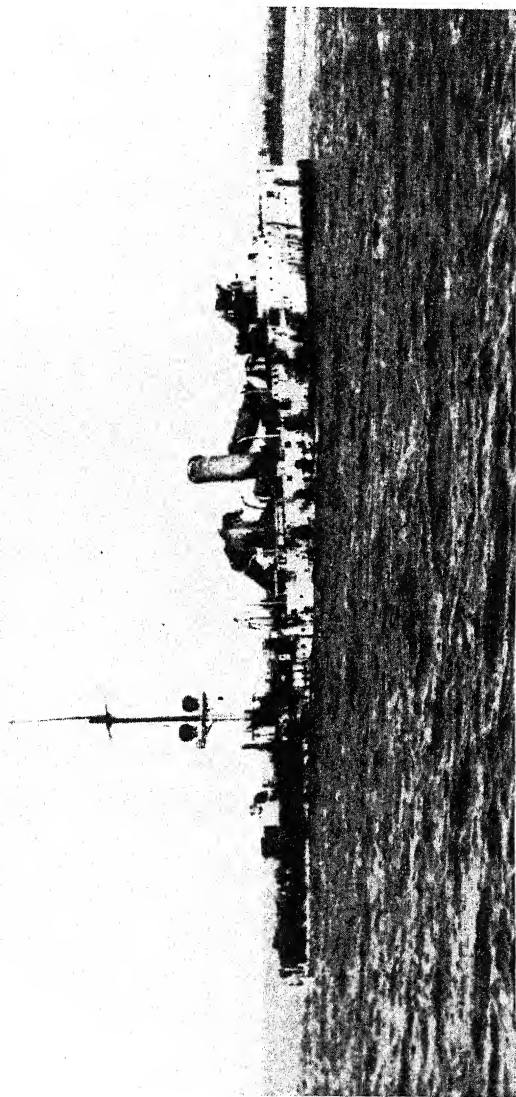
Realising that the chase must be hot on his trail now, Captain von Müller calmly went and coaled his ship in Diego Garcia, a port in the Chagos Islands. Although this was a British possession, the inhabitants, having no telegraphic communication, were unaware of the war, and the

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usual facilities were given to the *Emden* as if in peace time. There being no wireless or telegraph station on these islands, the *Emden's* arrival and departure went unreported for the present and no particular thought was given to it.

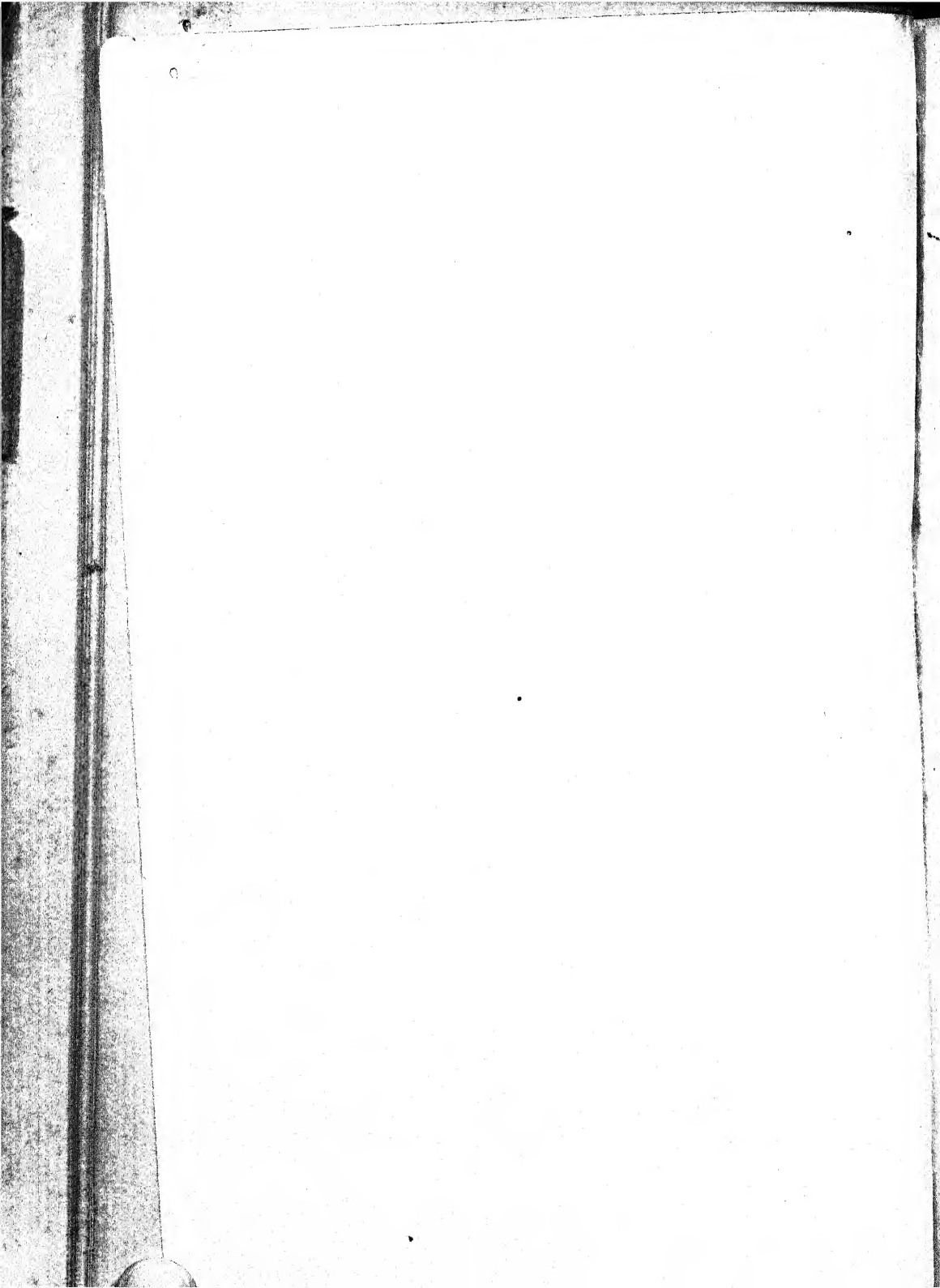
The British cruisers were ever and ever hot on her trail, but partly by good luck in the way of taking coal ships and partly by good management, the *Emden* continued to sink, or capture merchant ships and to evade action with warships. Sometimes our cruisers and the *Emden* passed each other a few hundred miles off, each unaware of the other's presence. In the meantime she continued to cause great inconvenience to shipping, and apprehension amongst the authorities remained.

The British port of Penang was used by all ships of our allies, and on the early morning of October 28th there were lying in the harbour a Russian cruiser, a French cruiser, and several destroyers. A four-funnelled cruiser was seen approaching. It could not be the *Emden*, as she had only three funnels, whilst this cruiser distinctly had four. It was obviously one of the British cruisers in search of her, and was therefore allowed to pass without the guard boat giving the alarm. Suddenly, to the surprise of the night watchmen on board the Russian cruiser *Zhemchug*, the *Emden*—for it was she—hoisted the German ensign, and, dashing past her at full speed, fired a torpedo into her, which hit her close to the engine-room and flooded it, and at the same time putting a broadside into her. Steaming on up the



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"EMDEN" AFTER BEING RUN ASHORE



An Elusive Foe—The “*Emden*,” 1914

harbour, Von Müller turned his ship round and then steamed out again, giving the *Zhemchug* a few passing shots, which finished her off and she went to the bottom. The crew of the *Zhemchug* had been too taken aback to reply.

As the *Emden* was steaming out of the harbour she met a steamer flying a red flag indicating she was carrying explosives. Von Müller, in spite of the fact that the French destroyers might at any minute come out and attack him, could not resist the temptation of capturing such a valuable ship. Later on in the war the Germans sank merchant ships without any warning, and regardless of life or anything else, but Von Müller proposed to take this ship in the ordinary way, and lowered his boats for this purpose, but no sooner had he done so than his look-outs reported “enemy cruiser approaching.” Von Müller thought the day of reckoning had at last come, and in a great hurry he recalled his boats, which his crew ran up on board, before dashing to their guns, whilst Von Müller boldly stood out to meet the foe.

Instead of being a cruiser, he found it was a small French destroyer, and in spite of the gallant defence put up, Von Müller sank her in a few minutes, and, gallant gentleman as he was, even stopped to pick up survivors.

After sinking the Russian cruiser and the French destroyer, the *Emden* once more vanished. Little wonder that the captain of every allied cruiser was keen to exchange shots with this evasive ship and gallant captain.

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Captain Von Müller eventually became overbold, for, making use again of his dummy funnel, he steamed one morning into the harbour in the Cocos Islands with the intention of capturing the wireless station there, as he knew this station was being widely used by the British for reporting his movements. As soon as he arrived off the harbour he lowered his boats and sent a party of men ashore to destroy all the apparatus, thinking that those on shore would be unsuspecting of the identity of his ship. But the look-out ashore was on the qui vive and, being thoroughly suspicious of every ship, he quickly got a message through to the British Commander-in-Chief that a suspicious-looking cruiser was approaching the harbour and lowering boats. The Admiral at once realised it must be the *Emden*. Wireless messages were broadcast north, south, east and west, and vessels hurried from all directions. Amongst the many ships which received the wireless news was H.M.S. *Melbourne* (Captain Silver), who was in charge of a convoy carrying Australian troops some fifty miles away. With him was a fine armoured Japanese cruiser, *Ibuki*, and another British light cruiser (the *Sydney*), commanded by Captain J. C. T. Glossop.

The convoy could not be left unprotected. The *Emden* must be destroyed. Who was to go? It was a puzzle for Captain Silver. He wanted to go himself, but he had many things to think of. The Japanese captain begged to go. Could Silver spare the *Ibuki*? He knew that another German cruiser, the *Königsberg*, was at large. He dared not

An Elusive Foe—The “*Emden*,” 1914

risk the safety of the convoy, that had to be his chief consideration. So the lot fell on the *Sydney*. To her was to come the honour of fighting another frigate action, with modern weapons, but with the old spirit. What a cheer must have gone up from the crew of the *Sydney* when they received the signal to “Proceed” from the *Melbourne*—but, although Glossop was eager to get at the *Emden*, yet one can imagine the thought running through his mind that he would have preferred a more equal combat, as the *Sydney* was a bigger cruiser than the *Emden* and more heavily armed. But he could be certain of having no walk-over when meeting a man like Captain von Müller.

A few minutes after receiving his orders from the *Melbourne* Glossop was off at full speed for the Cocos Islands. In the meantime, the *Emden* was busy destroying the cables.

Suddenly, about 9 a.m., the look-out sighted a British cruiser approaching at full speed. Von Müller knew that no French destroyers would be in the vicinity this time and that he had no time to spare. He therefore decided he would have to leave the men he had landed ashore, as he could not afford to delay whilst he got them aboard again.

The *Emden* boldly steamed out to sea to meet her adversary. At last her fate would be settled, and hardly forty minutes after the two ships had sighted each other, they were hotly engaged at ten thousand yards.

The *Sydney* had bigger guns, yet, on the other

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hand, the *Emden's* guns, although smaller, could fire more rapidly, but the *Sydney*, having the superior speed, was able to choose her own range and keep as far away or as close as she wanted.

One almost wishes that these two vessels could have got to close quarters and done some boarding. Soon after the action commenced, the *Emden* received damage to her fire control arrangements and one of her funnels and her foremast were shot away, but not before she had given almost as good as she got, for the *Emden's* fire was remarkably accurate and her first few salvoes fell all around the *Sydney*, one shell falling on board alongside a gun and killing, or wounding several of the crew.

Glossop, with his superior speed, soon got ahead and was able to rake the *Emden* with salvoes of lyddite shell, which swept her decks and sent up volumes of greeny-yellow smoke. Von Müller fought very gallantly on, although his steering gear became disabled, and he was obliged to steer with the aid of the screws.* Glossop turned his ship first one way and then the other, so as to give the batteries on either side a chance of firing, and also to open or close the range as he thought fit. The *Emden*, as far as possible, did the same thing, for it was to Von Müller's advantage to have a close action, so as to make the fullest use of his guns. With his reduced crew, he had to make the best use of them he could, and the supply of ammunition was

* By moving one screw faster than the other, a ship can be made to turn in any direction required, provided the wind is not too strong.

An Elusive Foe—The “*Emden*,” 1914

a great problem, as the “ready supply” at the guns soon got exhausted, and the guns’ crews had to wait whilst more ammunition was hoisted up from the bowels of the ship.

The destruction wrought on the *Emden* increased every minute, and fires were seen to be breaking out in different parts of the ship, due probably to the cordite catching fire or else some of the woodwork. Almost half-way through the action, which lasted nearly an hour and forty minutes, Glossop closed in sufficiently to fire a torpedo at the *Emden*, but it missed her. Von Müller would have liked to have replied with torpedoes himself, as, with the use of them at an appropriate minute, he still had a chance of sinking the *Sydney*, but the deck of the *Emden* was so smashed about, and his torpedo tubes damaged that he was unable to fire them.

Although Von Müller saw his last chance had gone, he refused to give in and headed his ship for the nearest land, which was a little island called North Keeling. Glossop was hard on him, and tried to destroy him before he got to the island. What with the smoke from the fires on board her and the smoke the lyddite shells were making, it was difficult to hit her. Von Müller still refused to surrender, and the *Emden*, now little but a shambles, with all her funnels and her masts gone, staggered on to the beach, having put up a very gallant defence for so long a time.

Glossop left her blazing on the beach, and went off at top speed to capture the *Buresk*, a collier

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which had been attending the *Emden* for some considerable period. The captain of the *Buresk*, tarred with the same brush as Von Müller, sank his ship by opening his sea-cocks sooner than let her fall into the hands of the British.

Glossop returned to the *Emden* about four o'clock in the afternoon, and saw her lying on the rocks and still burning, but Von Müller had not yet struck and the German ensign was still flying. Glossop therefore had no alternative but to open fire again, but not before he had given Von Müller a chance to surrender.

After a few rounds from the *Sydney*, the *Emden* struck her flag and hoisted a white one. No one could have blamed Von Müller had he done so before, and one can but admire him and his crew for sticking it out so long after all hope had gone for them.

As soon as the *Emden* struck, Glossop dashed off to the Cocos Islands to capture the men from the *Emden* who had been left ashore, only to find that they had escaped in a schooner belonging to the island. Such was the elusiveness of the crew of the *Emden*, and again one can offer nothing but praise for the remarkable way in which the men who escaped from the Cocos Islands, sailed to the Persian Gulf and then went overland to Germany.

On the day following the action, Glossop saved all the remaining crew of the *Emden* and took them prisoners, including Captain von Müller. The losses of the *Emden* had been heavy ; she had well over a hundred officers and men killed and a

An Elusive Foe—The “ Emden,” 1914

large number wounded. They had fought a good fight after their roving and successful career, but the long arm of the British Navy eventually brought the *Emden's* career to a dramatic end, as Von Müller must have known from the beginning. All the more credit to him !

CHAPTER IX

“ THINGS ARE NOT ALWAYS WHAT THEY SEEM ”

I

“ SPEEDY,” 1801

THOMAS COCHRANE, afterwards Lord Dundonald, had a varied career which would be hard to equal. It covered every imaginable sort of adventure and variety. His exploits as a young naval officer always brought him to the fore, partly because of his genius and dash, and partly because of his insubordinate nature and “ plain speaking,” which frequently got him into trouble. When a Captain in the Navy, and already a Knight Companion of the Bath, he entered Parliament, and whilst there he got mixed up in a famous trial, which cannot be told of here ; but as a result of it, Cochrane was sentenced to imprisonment, expelled from Parliament, and removed from the Navy, and his banner was removed from Westminster Abbey. The senior members of the Order of the Bath have their banners and coats of arms placed in the Henry VII Chapel in Westminster Abbey, and when a member dies his banner is taken down and replaced by the next senior. To have a banner

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removed as was Cochrane's was perhaps the biggest disgrace that could be given him, especially as his banner is supposed to have been kicked down the steps and trampled on.

He escaped from prison, was re-arrested and sent back. One would have thought that all this would have been enough to break any man's heart—but not Cochrane's. After his release from prison in 1816 he served with distinction in the Chilean, Brazilian and Greek Navies; and soon after his return to England he was reinstated in the British Navy as a Rear-Admiral. When over seventy years old he found himself Commander-in-Chief of Queen Victoria's Squadron on the North America and West Indies Station. He was buried in Westminster Abbey, and on the day before his funeral his banner as a Knight of the Bath, was replaced in the chapel—the Order having been restored to him in 1847.

It is only natural that a man with such a record should be a man of enterprise and great personality. Although inclined to be insubordinate himself, he, as often happens, required instant obedience from those under him, was a good leader, inspired confidence and was much loved by his subordinates.

One of his most interesting exploits was when, as a young Commander of twenty-four, he commanded a small brig called the *Speedy*. She was only a vessel of 158 tons and carried fourteen four-pounders; her crew consisted of about eighty men. Cochrane was a man full of ideas, and each time he refitted he would make some

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improvement to his vessel, by trying to get bigger sails or yards, or lightening his weights to increase her speed. The *Speedy* was so small, and the deck so low, that Cochrane was unable to stand up in his cabin, and when he wanted a shave he used to have the skylight over the cabin removed, so that he stood in his cabin with his head on the quarter-deck. What he did in bad weather history does not relate !

On some occasions he rigged up the *Speedy* as a "Q" ship. Ships were not known as "Q" ships in those days, but the idea was the same, and in the Great War of 1914-1918 the Mystery Ships were merely based on the old ideas of our predecessors. This and other *ruses de guerre* brought him great notoriety, especially as he was responsible for capturing no less than fifty vessels. The fact that the Spaniards, with whom we were at war, had prepared special ships to deal with Cochrane, and that various of their ships were employed in hunting him, will give some idea of the reputation that Cochrane with his little boat had made. He always had to be on the alert and knew that at any time he might run up against a superior ship, but Cochrane didn't worry much at the thought of that, rather did he think of some new scheme to meet every occasion. For instance, at one period he disguised the little *Speedy* to look like a Danish ship. His disguise was most carefully worked out and complete, even to the extent of having a Danish quartermaster. This particular disguise stood him in good stead when he was

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in danger of being captured by a Spanish frigate, as the Spaniards accepted him as a Dane, and Cochrane, having taken the extra precaution of flying the Plague flag as well, got away from a ship that could easily have destroyed him in a few minutes, though from subsequent events it looks as if he might have "taken her on."

Perhaps his most daring feat was on May 6th, 1801, at a time when he was short-handed, with barely fifty men on board, because he had so many men away in charge of the various ships he had captured. At 9.30 a.m. he was running in towards Barcelona. He had had a brush with some gunboats which had come out from this port the previous day, and no doubt he smelt some excitement in the air—he nearly got more of it than he bargained for.

As he was approaching, he saw, close under the land, a Spanish frigate, the *El Gamo*, of 32 guns, coming out after him. This was one of the Spanish ships specially ordered to look out for the *Speedy*, and no doubt the Spanish captain thought he was in for an easy thing. But Cochrane thought otherwise, and nothing daunted, instead of running away, as he well might—in fact, should have done, he prepared for battle and made at once to attack her. Cochrane hoisted American colours, thereby causing a certain amount of confusion and delay, as the Spanish captain thought that perhaps, after all, he had made a mistake and that it was not the *Speedy*. The delay caused was just what Cochrane wanted, as he realised

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that he would be hopelessly outmatched in a long-range action, and that in a close attack lay his only chance of success.

The Spaniards were not taken in for long, and soon opened fire with two broadsides one after the other. These Cochrane ignored and pressed on; then, hoisting British colours, he passed close under the *El Gamo's* lee and sailed close up alongside the Spanish ship, so that his yards and rigging got temporarily entangled with those of the Spaniard. When he was close alongside, he fired all his guns, which had been double shotted, into the Spaniard. The guns were pointing upward and the shots went smashing through the main deck, killing the captain and causing much damage and many casualties, whilst the Spaniards, unable to depress their guns, were only able to fire over him.* The Spaniards naturally tried to board, but each time Cochrane sheered off a bit so as to leave just sufficient distance between the *Speedy* and the Spanish ship to prevent the crew jumping on board, and in the meantime his crew used both their muskets and guns to drive the Spaniards back. By these clever and successful manœuvres Cochrane avoided being overpowered, which otherwise he would have been, as the *El Gamo* had a crew of some three hundred men—which was, however, gradually being reduced by the *Speedy's* fire.

The Spaniards gave up the idea of boarding, as in spite of their overwhelming numbers, it was

* See the *Revenge*, Chapter II, part I.

Things are not always what they seem not a paying job, and they lost heavily each time they tried, for, as soon as they appeared on the bulwarks or at the gangways, they got shot down. They therefore had to be content with using their guns, and inflicting such damage as they could on the little *Speedy's* rigging.

After an hour of this sort of fighting, Cochrane realised it could not go on for ever, as he was suffering so much damage aloft that at any moment his masts might be brought down, and he would be rendered helpless. Fortunately, owing to the careful handling of his ship, he had only so far lost about half a dozen men, whilst the Spaniards had lost a good deal more. Cochrane therefore decided to board his formidable enemy himself, and he warned his crew that they could expect no quarter if they were unsuccessful. Every man was needed if Cochrane was to have any chance of success, and he arranged to take the whole of his crew except the doctor, whom he left at the wheel, and a boy.

He not only had great daring but also a keen sense of humour combined with a rare bluff. Knowing the superstitions of the Spaniards, he arranged for some of his men to blacken their faces ; then, again laying his ship close alongside, drawing his sword he led the main part of his crew over the middle part of the ship, while the blackened sailors jumped over the bows and ran aft with loud howls and shrieks. The Spaniards were completely taken aback when they saw Cochrane dashing on board with his men, but they quickly rallied and rushed to repel them, and a hand-to-hand

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fight soon ensued, during which Cochrane's First Lieutenant and several men were severely wounded, and two or three men killed. The Spaniards might well have got the upper hand, but, a few minutes after they had joined battle with Cochrane and his men they saw the very Devil himself coming over the bows. This was too much for them and for a moment they stood still, too terrified to move, which gave time for Cochrane's men to advance. Cochrane had but few men to take so big a ship, but he had more bluff up his sleeve. He had already arranged for one of his crew to crawl along the Spaniard's deck, and haul down the Spanish flag, and now, standing on the bulwark, he hailed the *Speedy* below him and ordered fifty more men to follow him. The Spaniards were not to know that only the doctor and boy were left on board, and were completely taken in, and when they saw the Spanish colours hauled down they thought this must have been done by order of one of their surviving officers, and they at once surrendered after having 15 killed and 41 wounded against the *Speedy's* 3 and 11.

Only Cochrane's indomitable courage, combined with his special qualities, could have brought about such a result, and he would have chuckled to himself had he known that the *El Gamo* had been specially fitted out to capture him.

Having taken his prize, the question was, how to get it into port with such a large crew still on board. He placed his brother, who was a midshipman, in charge of her, and the *Speedy* and her

Things are not always what they seem prize proceeded to Port Mahon. Young Cochrane placed guns at the top of the hatches to keep the Spaniards down below, as otherwise he might have been overpowered, but without a great deal of trouble he got his prize safely in.

The *Speedy* herself was eventually captured by three French ships of the line—but not before Cochrane had thrown all his guns and stores overboard in an endeavour to lighten ship sufficiently to enable him to escape. It is hardly necessary to add that Cochrane did not surrender till all chance of escape had gone, and until the French ships were in a position to fire their great broadsides into him. In such high esteem was Cochrane held for his gallant handling of the *Speedy*, that when he handed his sword to the French captain, it was promptly returned to him, and then shortly after he was allowed to return to England.

II

"PRIZE," 1917

ONE fine evening—on April 30th, 1917, to be exact—a three-masted schooner was sailing peacefully along her way as many another schooner did at that time. The breeze was very light and she was making only one or two knots. Her sides were rusty, and she was obviously homeward bound after a long sea voyage, and there was nothing particular about her to attract attention. One or two men were standing about her decks, and

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apparently the remainder were down below for their evening meal. In ordinary times anyone seeing her from a passing steamer would have said : " Well, I wonder how long that fellow has been at sea," or, if time permitted, no doubt the steamer would close down upon her, and, by the use of many coloured flags, exchange complimentary signals with her. But as the year referred to was during the Great War, nobody dared stop, every ship moved on, without wasting a second that could be avoided, because none knew where a submarine might not be lurking, and just watching for some ship that was foolish enough to " pass the time of day." Submarines (except those that went out in the Atlantic) were in the habit of attacking nearly any ship they came across, and as their supplies of torpedoes and ammunition were limited, they generally reserved them for big liners or large ships with valuable cargoes ; but if a submarine was homeward bound and had a few rounds of ammunition left, she might as well expend it on even the smallest vessel.

And so it happened that on this peaceful April evening, about two miles away from the little schooner, a German submarine suddenly came to the surface—she was U.93 commanded by Commander von Spiegel, one of the most famous German U-boat commanders. He was on his way back to Germany having completed his raiding expedition—but to capture or destroy such a small schooner (she was only 199 tons) would be a matter of but a few minutes. It was already after 8.30 p.m.

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and getting dark, so Von Spiegel decided to waste no more time, and to close the schooner. He would just have time to finish her off nicely before dark. Von Spiegel already had four captains on board his submarine as prisoners, and there was just room for another.

The U.93 was an up-to-date submarine with two big guns in addition to her torpedo tubes—but torpedoes were too expensive to waste on a mere schooner, and, in any case the allowance of torpedoes had already been used. Submarines frequently destroyed this type of vessel by placing bombs on board, but this would entail getting a boat out and would cause more delay, so the crew of the submarine were ordered to man the guns, and then proceeded to shell the schooner, as the quickest way of forcing her to surrender. Naturally the schooner could not be expected to be able to put up with much shelling, and it was not surprising that the crew were seen hastily to abandon their ship. A boat from the schooner was quickly got out, and, in a certain amount of confusion and haste, the crew were seen to tumble into it. They appeared to be in rather a hurry to get clear of the ship, and the boat was got out a little quicker than had it been merely for an inspection by Government officials. Both the schooner and the submarine were obviously in a hurry, because, whilst the boat was being got clear of the ship, the submarine fired a few more shells “for luck,” and to hurry them up. The shells may have been lucky hits from the

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submarine's point of view, but they were extremely unlucky for the schooner, as some of them hit her on the water line, and started a leak not only in one place, but in several. With no one left on board now to work the pump it would only be a matter of time before the schooner sank.

Von Spiegel, seeing this, thought sufficient damage had been done for the time being, and, ceasing firing for a moment, came up from directly astern of the schooner, a precaution invariably taken by submarines, as, anyone who has read history, knows that all kinds of bluffs are resorted to in war, as is shown on several occasions in this book. Apart from historical knowledge, it was well known that Mystery Ships, or "Q" ships, were being employed by both sides. Much has been written about them, showing how both sides had fairly accurate information about them. It became, therefore, a matter of instinct with a submarine commander to treat even the most innocent-looking ship with a certain amount of suspicion. Many a submarine had paid the penalty for not being cautious enough when approaching innocent-looking craft.

This approaching from the stern was therefore quite natural, and Von Spiegel continued thus till within less than a hundred yards from the schooner. He then hauled out a bit to give her the sinking shot. Von Spiegel had already wasted twenty minutes over this little vessel, and he wanted to get on. He had already been several weeks at sea and the crew were looking forward to a rest ashore

Things are not always what they seem at Kiel. The German sailors were standing round the guns, looking at their last victim being hastily destroyed when, suddenly, and as if by magic, the White Ensign fluttered from the masthead of the innocent-looking schooner, the innocent-looking deckhouses had disappeared, and, in the twinkling of an eye, the little schooner had revealed herself as H.M.S. *Prize*, commanded by Lieutenant W. E. Sanders of the Royal Naval Reserve. Guns, which had been concealed before under the deckhouses, belched forth their shot and shell. What a shock the submarine's crew must have had, and Von Spiegel was as surprised as any of them, as it was almost incredible that anybody could be still on board. Indeed, how the concealed crew had endured the terrible ordeal is hard to understand. The shells from the submarine had not only wrought much damage to the schooner, but also wounded many of the concealed men. Sanders had fortunately trained his crew for this form of warfare, and they had lain still and endured much with implicit confidence in their captain. To lie concealed on board a ship which is being heavily shelled, and with no chance of replying is an ordeal that has to be gone through to be understood. These men of Sanders knew full well that at any moment the next shell might blow them up. It would have been different, and much easier to endure if they had been firing back again, then their blood would have been up, and they would have given as good as they took. But sitting still as a sort of "live bait" is a cold-blooded ordeal

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and can only be carried out by a well-disciplined crew.

Von Spiegel realised with a start, when he saw the White Ensign, that he was up against one of the Mystery or "Q" ships. His guns were still manned and the crews promptly fired another few shells at the *Prize*. At such close range they could not help but hit her, and another of the *Prize's* crew was wounded in the process. Von Spiegel—whose submarine was now being hit—realising the danger he was in, at once put his helm over to ram the *Prize*, but found himself unable to turn in the short distance between the two, and hauled off again.

In the meantime the *Prize* was doing great damage, though much handicapped by the oncoming darkness; one shell hit the forward gun of the submarine, and away went the gun and its crew; another struck the conning tower causing serious damage. Shell after shell was fired, whilst the quick-firing guns were busy trying to put out of action the men about the decks, who were trying to escape below, hoping the submarine would be able to submerge before being destroyed.

Very soon, however, the submarine vanished from sight in the darkness and smoke. At the time—in fact for many months afterwards—it was thought that the submarine had been destroyed, as the last seen of her was a cloud of smoke.

Owing to the fact that the auxiliary engines with which the *Prize* was fitted had been put out of action by an unlucky shot, she was unable to

Things are not always what they seem proceed to where the submarine had last been seen, but, Sanders, assuming that she had sunk, at once sent his boat, containing the "Panic party" (for such was the name given to the crew that had abandoned ship) to look for survivors. Darkness had already set in, but the boat was able to save three men, including Von Spiegel—a fact which in itself seemed to confirm the idea that the submarine had been destroyed, as Von Spiegel had been on the conning tower, and had no doubts whatever that he had lost his submarine.

Sanders therefore turned his attention to his own ship. So intent had he been on the action, that he had been indifferent to what damage his own ship might have sustained, and was rather taken aback at finding that she was so badly damaged, with water still pouring into the hold and the auxiliary engines out of action. It was nearly flat calm, a fact which had both advantages and disadvantages. The calm sea was of great assistance when it came to patching up the holes in the ship's side; but what about getting back into harbour with no wind and no engines? This was a problem Sanders had to face, and he had all his work cut out to save his ship.

He was a kind-hearted man and naturally had a thought for his prisoners, but even the most kind-hearted man in war time is obliged to think of his own crew first. Sanders, however, was lucky, because Commander von Spiegel and the other two prisoners were ready to "chip in," for they had admired the bravery of the *Prize's* crew, and,

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not only gave their parole but offered to help work the ship—an offer which was gladly accepted.

By strenuous efforts, and with the assistance of one of the prisoners who was a mechanic, the engines of the *Prize* were at last got to work, but not before a fire had been started through a backfire. Luckily it was extinguished before reaching the magazine which was in close proximity. Temporary repairs were made, and the vessel eventually got under sail as well as steam.

Sanders was 120 miles from the nearest land, but luckily the weather remained calm and on the afternoon of May 2nd he took his ship into Kinsale Harbour. At almost the same time, whilst the *Prize*, damaged and with many wounded on board, was being got into harbour, her late adversary, the U.93, was doing the same thing. Unable to dive after the shelling she had received from the *Prize*, she had, by great skill escaped in the darkness and amidst the falling shell. A young sub-lieutenant had taken temporary command, and in spite of being short of crew through killed, wounded and prisoners, he succeeded in getting the submarine back to Germany without submerging, as owing to the damage to the conning tower he was unable to do so—a remarkably fine feat, as it had never been believed that a submarine so badly damaged could survive. No one was more surprised than Von Spiegel when many months afterwards, he was informed that his submarine had returned to Germany. Sanders and his crew had they lived would have been equally surprised, as the evidence

Things are not always what they seem of her destruction was as complete as anything could be. But this was only one example of how far more difficult it was to destroy submarines than one would have thought, and many a time a ship would claim, on very good grounds, to have destroyed a submarine, only to find that she had escaped.

Lieutenant Sanders was awarded the Victoria Cross after this very gallant and well-disciplined action. He hailed from New Zealand, and had, like thousands of other men born of the Old Country, come overseas to give his life, if necessary, for the welfare of the British Empire. Unfortunately he never lived to receive the Victoria Cross. His daring spirit went on till a few months later the *Prize* was sent to the bottom with Sanders and his very gallant crew.

CHAPTER X

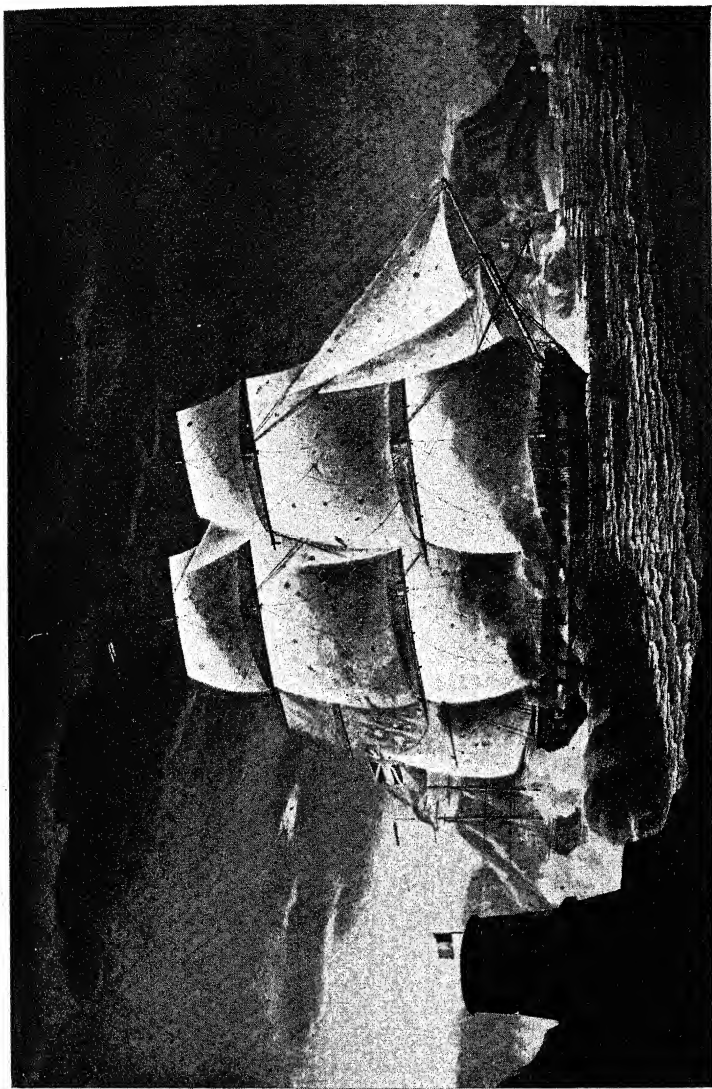
AN ERROR MADE GOOD

“JUNO,” 1794

HAS wireless been a blessing or a curse to the sailor ? It is a thought to ponder over. Nowadays messages and “ the latest ” can be flashed through the ether in a matter of a few seconds. If the Commander-in-Chief in the Pacific wishes to know whether he should wear a white tie or a black one for dinner, he can ask Whitehall and get a reply “ by return.”

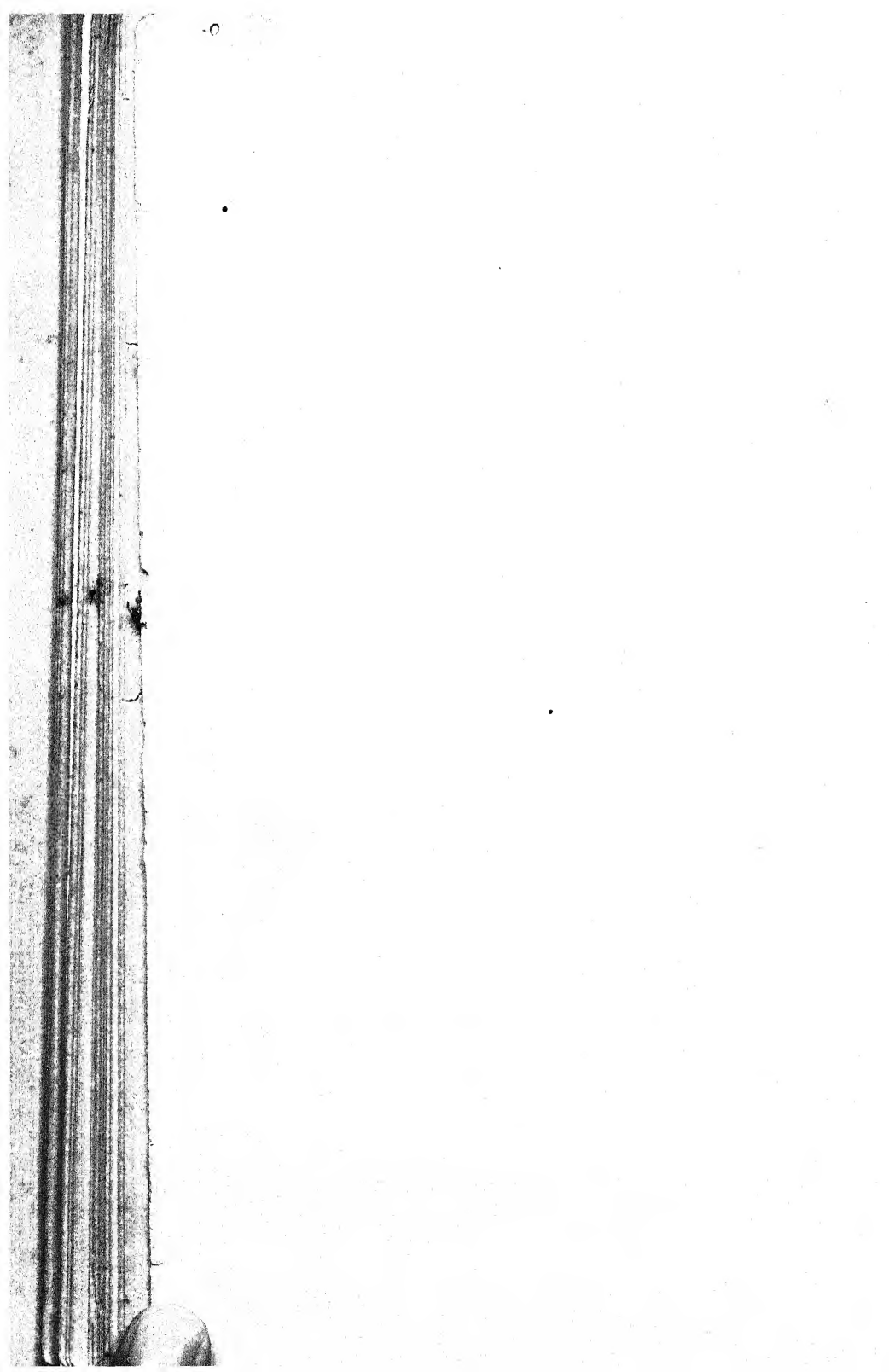
But what of the good old days when Drake sailed round the world, and the Admiral or Captain of a ship was to all intents and purposes a potentate, with the power of life and death in his hands ; and news of events in England or elsewhere could only reach him after long delays, and by roundabout channels ?

Even in the autumn of 1914 sailing ships, not fitted with wireless, would arrive in the English Channel, totally unaware that the greatest European conflict which had yet taken place, was in progress ; and one can readily imagine the shock a German captain got when he hailed a British ship to ask for his bearings, and then found he was a prisoner.



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"JUNO" SAILING OUT OF TOULON



An Error Made Good—"Juno," 1794

Similar things had happened before, and in spite of the wonderful inventions and conveniences we now have, will, no doubt, happen again, because nothing has yet been invented by human brains which is foolproof.

At a time when France was going through a period of trouble in 1793, the British Fleet, under Vice-Admiral Lord Hood, with his flag flying in the *Victory*, was with the French Fleet in Toulon, the great naval port opening out into the Mediterranean. The details of the affairs ashore need only be briefly referred to in this story; sufficient to say that the Royalists had turned over Toulon, with all its docks and harbours, to the then allied forces of England and Spain, but towards the end of the year, the Republicans, after much fighting, regained Toulon and the British evacuated the harbour and the fleet sailed.

One of our frigates, the *Juno*, under the command of Captain Samuel Hood, a cousin of the Commander-in-Chief, was one of the ships of Lord Hood's squadron, but he did not remain all the time at Toulon and returned to Malta for a refit and to get stores, etc. He sailed again from Malta early in the year 1794, with a party of about a hundred and fifty additional ratings on board for various ships in the fleet, to rejoin the Commander-in-Chief at Toulon. Some of these additional ratings were Maltese, who have for a very long period served on board British ships and rendered very good service indeed.

Hood knew the harbour of Toulon fairly well,

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having been there only a few months previously, and, as he imagined it was in the hands of the British, he felt quite at home when he was sailing into the harbour with a light breeze on the dark night of January 11th. He was somewhat surprised at not getting the usual exchange of signals as he approached the harbour, but perhaps this could be accounted for by the misty weather. What apparently surprised him most was not seeing the lights of the fleet at anchor in the Outer Roads. He therefore placed a couple of midshipmen on the forecastle as extra look-outs to inform him as soon as the lights came in sight. Although he had no pilot on board, and in spite of the none too clear state of the evening, he decided he would carry on into the inner harbour and join the British Fleet there, as he guessed that after the recent gales they must be sheltering in the Inner Roads. It was rather a risky undertaking as the navigating into the inner harbour is difficult, and it would have been better to have had a pilot on board with local knowledge. However, Hood, who was a fine seaman and had an excellent Master on board, got safely through, and on entering the inner harbour, he was able to make out the lights of ships at anchor, so all was well.

Unfortunately, a brig was anchored in his way and he must have cursed good and hearty at seeing a small ship anchored in the channel proper for big ships, a proceeding which is contrary to the custom of the Navy. Anyhow, there was nothing for it but to set more sail to pass under her stern

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to avoid a collision. As he was passing very close to the brig, the latter naturally hailed the *Juno*, an ordinary custom between ship and ship in the dark. There was nothing in the "hail" to cause any suspicion, and Hood at once replied: "*Juno*, British." The reply from the brig was not quite heard, but it appeared to be "Viva," and the crew of the brig were heard shouting in French and Spanish. This fact did not cause any particular alarm, as with the British in possession of Toulon the previous year, the languages of all three countries, Britain, France and Spain, were frequently heard, as all three were working in co-operation.

Just as Hood was passing under the stern of the brig, someone shouted out to "Luff," this being a nautical expression meaning to bring the ship up towards the wind. Hood naturally thought this was a friendly bit of advice to avoid him grounding, as he knew he was in shallow water, and so he promptly ordered the helm to be put down, which would have the desired effect of bringing the ship up to the wind; but barely had the order been given, when the *Juno* touched the ground. This was unfortunate, but beyond being annoying not particularly serious, as it was quite calm and the ship could probably easily be got off. The crew were at once sent aloft to furl the sails to prevent the ship being driven harder aground.

Before the men had completed their job, a sudden change in the wind started to move the ship astern, and it looked as if she might come

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clear of the shoal. Hood was delighted, as it looked as if he had a good chance of getting his ship off without much trouble or any damage, and in order not to miss it he ordered the suitable sails to be set. The crew nipped about here and there to obey his orders, for they were as keen as Hood to get their ship off as quickly as possible, as no seaman likes his ship to be aground. As a result of this manœuvre, it was discovered that the fore-part of the ship was now off the shoal, but the stern was still aground, and the rudder useless. Hood at once ordered the anchor to be let go, and some boats to be hoisted out to lay out another anchor, and warp the ship off.

Sailors, even at the present day, but more especially at the time of this event, are always prepared for an order of this sort. An anchor would be placed in one of the ship's boats, whilst another boat would take a hawser. The boats would then proceed to any direction required, the anchor would be let go, and the hawser brought back to the ship, enabling the ship to haul herself off, or, in other cases, prevent her from swinging in an undesirable direction. Sometimes, to prevent a ship falling over, the hawser would be attached to the mast-head.

Whilst all this was going on, the brig had been observed lowering a boat which proceeded to pull towards the town ; no particular notice was taken of this, but the officers of the *Juno* were a little surprised when, in the middle of their operations of laying out the anchor, the boat was observed

An Error Made Good—"Juno," 1794

approaching the ship. In accordance with the usual naval custom, the boat was hailed, and replied in English, "Aye, aye"—which, in naval parlance, meant there were officers on board.

The boat came alongside and two officers jumped out and came on board the *Juno*. Going up to Hood, they informed him that, according to the local regulations, he would have to take the *Juno* to another part of the harbour and be put in quarantine.

Hood was a bit taken aback at this, and inquired where the fleet was lying, and whether he had mistaken the lights ahead. He became a little suspicious of the evasive reply he got, but an observant midshipman, quicker still, had already had his suspicions about these officers, and had observed the red, white and blue cockade in their hats; and Hood, hearing him remark something about "National cockades," became thoroughly aroused, and, with the aid of a lantern, looked more closely. He got a bit of a shock when he saw the French cockade, and could not for the moment imagine what had happened, but he realised at once that some terrible mistake must have occurred. The French officers (for such they were), seeing they had been detected, attempted to reassure Hood by saying, "Make yourself easy, the English are good people, we will treat them kindly. The English Admiral sailed some time ago."

In the twinkling of an eye Hood then grasped the situation; no wireless had told *him* that Toulon was no longer under British control, and

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he had not only sailed in unsuspectingly, but had unluckily run his ship aground under the very guns of the forts.

Hood remained calm, but the news of the mistake quickly passed through the ship and caused a little alarm. The thoughts of being taken prisoners must have caused some fear, as France was in the hands of revolutionaries, who, as a class of people, are not given to sympathy or kindness.

Hood acted promptly, and called to the Officer of Marines, and ordered the Frenchmen to be arrested and placed below; the marines of the *Juno* didn't waste any time in seeing that their captain's orders were carried out. Marines never do waste time when obeying orders.

As luck would have it, another change in the wind, favourable to the *Juno*, occurred at this time. One of the officers who had been the first to observe the breeze coming down the harbour, drew Hood's attention to it, and he jumped at the further chance offered him. Once more the crew were immediately ordered aloft to make all sail. They had never run so hard, or worked so fast in their lives: nothing could be too swift for them in order to get out of this revolutionary harbour. In a matter of a few minutes, all sail had been set, and, in the meantime, the men on the forecastle had been given the order to cut the cable, which they did with alacrity.

It was a great relief to all on board to feel the ship slowly moving through the water once more as the wind filled the sails. As the breeze

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freshened, they felt that they would, with luck, now be quickly out of the harbour, though they still had the forts to deal with. In order to save time, the brig's boat and the *Juno's* launch had been cut adrift. Hood, all the time, had an eye on the brig, as he knew that the look-outs were no doubt carefully watching his proceedings, and although it was dark and they could not see very well, they could be able to hear the orders being given, and wonder what was going on.

As was to be expected, no sooner had the *Juno* started to gather way, than the brig, and later the forts, opened a heavy fire on her, and Hood now had to run the gauntlet of the fire from all of them. The crew of the *Juno* manned their guns and replied to the forts. It was surprising that the forts had not opened fire before, but probably there had been some mistake on their part as well as on the *Juno's*. It was impossible to see in the dark what effect their shots had, but the *Juno* received a good deal of damage, chiefly in her rigging. But she succeeded, with some satisfaction, in silencing at least one of the forts.

Hood, on the weather side of his poop, must have realised that he was in a pretty tight corner, as it was well known that the forts were heavily armed. The wind was favourable for the *Juno*, and Hood made full use of it, and with only the flashes of the guns to help him (they were both a help and a hindrance, as they gave him guidance as to the way out of the harbour, but sometimes blinded him just at a critical moment) he sailed

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straight out of the harbour amidst the shot and smoke. Thanks to his good seamanship and the smartness of the crew, he soon found himself past all dangers, and shortly after midnight, about an hour after he had entered, he found himself once more out of the Lions' Den into which he had so innocently sailed.

The *Juno* was fortunate in not having a single casualty, which shows that the firing of the forts was not very good, and, apart from the damage to her rigging and sails, only a few shots had entered her hull. All the damage was easily repaired and did not interfere with her seaworthiness or readiness for action should she meet an enemy ship. On the other hand, the men of the *Juno* must have had some satisfaction at having two French prisoners on board.

One can only imagine what the thoughts of all hands must have been as they raised cheer after cheer. At eleven o'clock they were aground in a hostile harbour, a fully armed brig close alongside them, and a line of forts guarding both sides of the exit to the sea ; and yet, soon after midnight, they were free once more on the "briny blue," thanks to not only a favourable wind, but also to fine seamanship, good leadership, and a gallant and efficient crew.

It is not to be wondered at that Captain Hood performed many other brilliant services in the Navy for his country, and was rewarded with a baronetcy.

CHAPTER XI

"ON THEIR LAWFUL OCCASIONS"

I

"WINDSOR CASTLE," 1807

MERCHANT vessels, although built for and employed on commercial enterprises, have ever been ready to put up a good defence, when the country whose flag they fly has been engaged in a war, if, owing to the lack of official protection by men-of-war, they have been called on to fend for themselves. Privateers in the olden days were particularly on the look-out for merchantmen, and the early years of 1800 were no exception.

A merchant ship is always liable to capture if carrying contraband, which comprises certain articles which nations agree can only be used for warlike purposes. Whether a ship is carrying contraband or not, the safety of the crew should always be arranged for. In cases where a merchant ship is armed with a defensive gun, and uses it, then no blame can be attributed to the privateer, man-of-war, or submarine which is attempting her capture, if life is lost in the action.

A particularly famous privateer was the *Jeune Richard*, of French nationality, which captured

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many an innocent merchant ship. But one day she ran up against more than she bargained for.

In the West Indies service was a packet called the *Windsor Castle*, commanded by Captain Rogers. She used to carry the mails and passengers from England to Barbados and the Leeward Islands, and left England in September, 1807, on one of her regular voyages there.

The passage from England to Barbados is a particularly uninteresting one, as very little land is sighted from the time of leaving the English shores till arriving at the Barbados, a low-lying island in the West Indies. Sometimes ships would call *en route* at Bermuda, an equally low-lying island, but this was more the exception than the rule. The expanse of water between England and the West Indies is so vast as to make it quite impossible for any nation to provide sufficient cruisers to safeguard all merchant ships unless such ships sailed in convoys, a system which has many advantages and disadvantages. For instance, a convoy has always to go at the speed of the slowest ship. The *Windsor Castle* was a fast ship for vessels of the period, and it was reasonably safe for her to go on voyages alone ; but on this voyage she was both lucky and unlucky.

On October 1st in the early morning, the look-out at the masthead sighted a ship approaching. As soon as Rogers sighted the strange sail, knowing it was almost certain to be a privateer, he naturally and rightly tried to escape, setting every stitch of canvas she could carry, and altering

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her course so as to avoid the stranger. Rogers, who was watching the stranger very carefully, soon recognised the ship as the famous *Jeune Richard*, and in spite of his desperate efforts to escape, realised that this would not be possible. In the meantime he had made such preparations for resistance as he could, for he had no intention of giving in without putting up a stout defence.

The *Windsor Castle* was armed with six long 4-pounders and two 9-pounders, and carried a complement of twenty-eight men and boys, including cooks and stewards. The guns of the *Windsor Castle* were only mounted for defensive purposes and therefore placed round the stern, where they did not interfere with the ship's passengers and cargo.

Whilst his crew were busy getting ready for the fray, Rogers made arrangements to get rid of the mails he was carrying sooner than let them fall into the hands of the enemy ; as a last resort he would throw them overboard, heavily weighted, to ensure them sinking.

About noon the *Jeune Richard*, which had been gradually closing on the *Windsor Castle*, hoisted the French colours, which removed any lingering doubt Rogers might have had as to who she was. Shortly afterwards she opened fire on the *Windsor Castle*, no doubt thinking she had an easy prize, as had so often fallen to her lot. Rogers at once ordered his stern guns to open fire in reply, whilst the passengers and crew not required for fighting the guns or supplying the ammunition were

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ordered to take cover, so as to avoid unnecessary loss of life. The Frenchman, having the better speed, soon got close aboard the *Windsor Castle* and, hailing her in a peremptory manner, ordered her to strike her colours. Rogers wished him to another place, whereupon the Frenchman ran alongside and, grappling the *Windsor Castle*, lashed his ship alongside. Rogers, with his few men, was all ready to defend his ship, and at once set about to repel the boarders.

The *Windsor Castle's* nettings and bulwarks were high and it was rather difficult for the privateer's crew to get on board, but they little expected the reception they got. Whilst the Frenchmen were scrambling over the nettings, Rogers's crew, armed with pikes, muskets and swords, were waiting for them, and as they came on board they gave them a warm reception. The crew of the *Windsor Castle* were fighting for their lives and gave no quarter. Meeting the Frenchmen with as good as they got, a short hand to hand fight took place, sword to sword, and musket to musket, and in spite of several wounds and many bruises, the British crew soon repelled them and to such good purpose, that about ten of them were killed or wounded. The Frenchmen had had enough, and more than they bargained for and set about casting off their grapplings in great haste with the idea of getting free. It so happened that the main yard of the *Windsor Castle* was entangled with the rigging of the Frenchman, and the two ships remained locked together so that in spite of desperate endeavours

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on both sides, the French ship could not get clear. The ships were too close to be able to make much use of their guns, but fierce fighting went on between the men within reach of each other : muskets, cutlasses and pikes, were all used in the rough and tumble fight, and both sides continued to suffer casualties.

All the time Rogers was trying, with such men as he could take away from the boarders, to get his guns into action, at first without much success ; and realising that he might at any time be overpowered, and not having enough men to "go round," he reluctantly had to send a few selected men of his crew, whom he could ill spare from the fight, to look after the mails and destroy them as the last resource. He realised that his chief charge was His Majesty's Mails.

One can understand the terrible situation in which Rogers found himself. Some of his crew were mere boys doing their first sea voyage, but luckily they had stout hearts. He had at one and the same time to try and repel the boarders, get his main guns in action, and look after the safety of the mails, all the time keeping an eye on the general handling of his ship in case the Frenchman should succeed in casting himself clear. His crew fought with the utmost gallantry, and one might have thought they had been trained in the Navy instead of as ordinary merchant men, but their conduct was such as has always been in accordance with the custom of the men belonging to that service.

About three o'clock in the afternoon, after the

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ships had been locked together for over two hours, the *Windsor Castle* was able to get one of her guns into action and Rogers ordered it to be shotted with double grape, canister and a hundred musket balls. It was just ready in the nick of time ; a few minutes' delay and it would have been of no use, for the Frenchmen were about to make a second attempt to board. Rogers, still calm and collected, waited till exactly the appropriate moment and then ordered the gun to be fired into the Frenchman—with disastrous effects on the boarding party. The dead and wounded were flung all over the place in a most gruesome fashion. Rogers, realising at once the disorganised and confused state the remnant of the privateer's crew were in, made a rapid decision to turn the tables and do the boarding himself. Calling a few of his depleted crew together, he led them with the utmost gallantry and regardless of the cost, over the side of the Frenchman : he had but six men with him, but what they lacked in numbers they made up in courage. The privateer's men, unused to such treatment at the hands of a packet, were completely taken aback, and must have been amazed at such effrontery.

The Frenchmen, thoroughly confused and with large numbers of the crew killed and wounded, began to lose heart, and not being used to having to fight on their own decks, soon gave in and surrendered, and the French flag was lowered to a merchant ship which had far fewer guns and men on board.

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Having captured the ship, Rogers was faced with the difficulty of how to make sure of his prize*. The French crew had been driven below, but Rogers had not sufficient men to ensure them staying there, so he arranged to allow one man out of the hold at a time, and as each man emerged he was seized and clapped into irons obtained from the *Jeune Richard*. This method disposed of any possibility of further resistance.

Rogers now had to turn his attention to his own ship. He found her badly damaged, the masts and rigging all having suffered, and his mainyard had been carried away ; and, out of his tiny crew of 28 men, 3 had been killed and 10 wounded, nearly all of them severely.

A few days later the *Windsor Castle* and her prize the *Jeune Richard* arrived safely at Barbados, and received the praise they had so richly earned.

II

"PALM BRANCH," 1916

WHEN the Great War of 1914-18 was being waged, our merchant seamen had a new, and, till that time, unknown danger to face. Submarines, with the power of invisibility, were sent far and wide over all the seas, and they were able to make their attack by torpedo or gunfire. If the former method was employed, the merchantman had but little chance of escape unless he was lucky enough

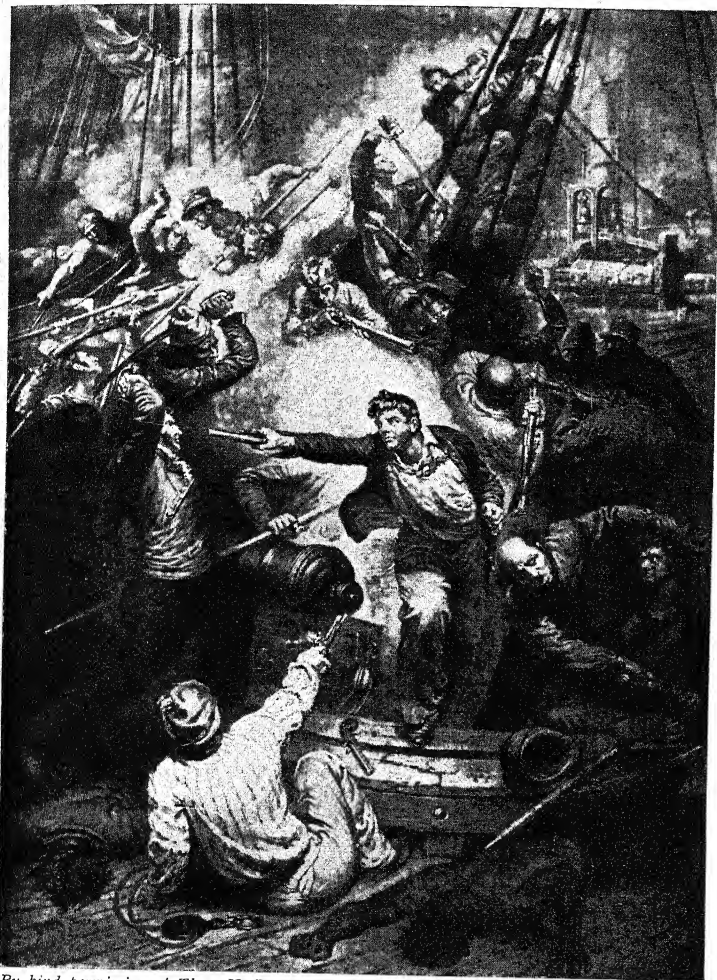
* Reference *Speedy*, Chapter IX, part I.

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to see the track of the torpedo coming, and then, by the skilful use of his helm, to avoid it. Various defensive methods were used to reduce the chances of being torpedoed. For instance, ships would steer a zigzag course which had the great advantage of making it more difficult for the submarine, whose speed, when submerged, was slow, to get into a good position for firing a torpedo ; on the other hand it made the voyage a good deal longer, which often played an important part in arranging the coal or fuel supply.

Another method employed by ships, both of the Royal Navy and Mercantile Marine, was camouflage. This meant they were painted in a variety of colours with irregular lines. This idea, again, if combined with such simple things as having the yards of the ship set crosswise instead of square, or the masts arranged out of the main line of the ship, would frequently throw the submarine commander out of his calculations when he was trying to estimate the course and speed of the ship he was about to attack. Unfortunately, no camouflage could be devised which was suitable for all occasions, as the colours which were suitable for one kind of weather and atmosphere were unsuitable for another.

Many other dodges were used by our ships to avoid the dreaded torpedo. As a rule a submarine was at a great disadvantage during the night, so that ships would whenever possible, arrange to make the land, or to pass places specially favourable to the submarines, in the dark. If ships sailed



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“ WINDSOR CASTLE ” IN ACTION

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in convoy with a man-of-war escort this gave them the greatest protection of all, but, as we have seen in the case of the *Windsor Castle*, the convoy system was not always desirable.

If the submarine came to the surface and used its gun, then the merchant ship had a more sporting chance, though the submarine always had the advantage, in that it could at any time break off the action and submerge.

In spite of the numerous defensive methods introduced and adopted to combat the submarines, the time always comes when the individual skill and courage of a captain, and the gallantry of a crew are called on. Machines have not yet succeeded in replacing the human spirit, which in the long run is what overcomes an enemy and wins the day. Endless tales of gallantry could be told of our great merchant sailors who went to sea through minefields, and among lurking submarines never knowing whether they might not at any minute be blown to smithereens. Sometimes their ships would be torpedoed, but afterwards towed into port; yet the men who manned these ships would be ready to go to sea again, knowing full well that they would probably be torpedoed again, possibly at the cost of their lives. The enemy tried to put fear in them by shooting Captain Fryatt, who was accused of having tried to ram one of the submarines. Big liners like the *Lusitania* and others were torpedoed and sunk without warning, taking to the bottom with them thousands of innocent passengers; tramp steamers, sailing ships, fishing

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craft, were all sent to the bottom in a ruthless manner, and not even hospital ships, with their cargoes of wounded men and hospital nurses, were spared. But nothing the enemy could do succeeded in damping the courage of our merchant seamen, and the record of gallantry set up by the officers and men of the Mercantile Marine will for ever stand out as a great example of the fearless courage of our seamen. They continued to sail the seas on their lawful occasions in order that the inhabitants of our islands could live in safety, knowing full well, which the inhabitants sometimes forget, that without the Mercantile Marine they would have starved. Some of our merchant ships had guns with which to defend themselves, others had nothing. Whichever it was, the masters of these ships were ready to face any situation.

On November 21st, 1916, the *Palm Branch*, a four-thousand ton ship, under the command of Captain Frederick Maude Maling, was steaming down the Channel, when, without the slightest warning, a submarine rose out of the water and opened fire on her. Maling, like Rogers of the *Windsor Castle*, decided not to give in without a run for his money. He had no guns, but he was a seaman born, and knew how to handle a ship. To try and escape was courting disaster, as the submarine commander would be able to put all niceties aside, and have a reasonable excuse to finish the ship off with a torpedo. Maling knew this full well, but he had faith in himself and his crew. He turned his ship so as to bring the submarine right

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astern of him, and at the same time he rang down "Full Speed Ahead." The chief engineer had only to tell his firemen what was on, and they were going to make sure they "did their bit" to bring yet more lustre to the Red Ensign. Streaming with sweat, they stoked the furnaces as they had never stoked before; they knew death was hanging around, but they would show the enemy that *their* ship had to be treated with respect.

The submarine, surprised at an unarmed ship behaving in this fashion instead of surrendering, increased her fire. Shots and shells were bursting all round the *Palm Branch*. Yet what cared the crew for this? They intended to give the submarine a lesson in British seamanship and calmness. And nobly they did it! The life-boats of the *Palm Branch* were soon badly holed, so that any idea of getting away in the boats was removed. Shells fell all over and right into the ship, smashing up the crew's living quarters and wounding some of the men. The forecastle was set on fire, and the man at the wheel was hit by a splinter, but he calmly remained at his post.

The captain all this time was calmly conning his ship, and trying to dodge the enemy shells. Eventually the submarine had got so far astern that her commander was no longer in a position to use her torpedoes, and realising that she was expending a lot of ammunition to no great purpose, gave up the fight. The *Palm Branch* was able to call in port for repairs, and then continue her voyage to America. The skill of the captain, who

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was awarded the Distinguished Service Order, and the courage of all hands, had saved this unarmed ship from a powerful enemy. When one thinks of the odds against Maling, and the very little chance of escape he had—one can well pause for a moment and remember that as is so frequently borne out in the stories we read, and can afford to be repeated again and again, it is the spirit of a Nation which wins a war. A just cause is the only support a great spirit needs.

III

"THE MANCHESTER TRADER," 1917

AFTER reading of the action of an unarmed ship, it may be of interest to glance at one of an armed ship. "Armed" sounds a big word, and one is apt to imagine it refers to a ship bristling with guns, but in most cases our merchant ships, if armed at all, merely had one small gun in the stern which could only throw a shot weighing a few pounds, and which was not, as a rule, potent enough to knock a hole in a submarine even if it hit it.

It has already been noted how certain places were more infested by submarines than others. The calm waters of the Mediterranean were specially suited to the submarines in the summer months, and many of our ships went down with heavy loss of life, but whenever an opportunity occurred of putting up a fight, the masters of our ships were, as usual, not slow to take it. As many

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ships as possible were fitted with a small gun in the stern to be used for defence purposes. Even these small guns used to be a great moral support for an otherwise defenceless crew, and also as so many of our merchant seamen have the fighting spirit in them, when their country is in danger, it was a source of some satisfaction to them that they at least had something with which to reply to an enemy. Though of no value for destroying a submarine, these guns could be very useful indeed in keeping a submarine at a respectable distance, which reduced the chances of its scoring a hit—a submarine working a long way from her base did not wish to receive even the slightest damage.*

This was shown one fine day by Captain Frederick Douglas Struss, the master of the *Manchester Trader*, a collier homeward bound in ballast from the Grecian Islands, which had been used for our naval forces engaged in operations in the Eastern Mediterranean. The *Manchester Trader* on May 4th, 1917, was steaming peacefully along, and thoughts were turned to England, when, suddenly, Struss became aware of shells falling around his ship. A submarine was shelling him from a long range, much too long for the little gun of the *Trader* to have any chance of hitting her in reply, but Struss reckoned that keeping the submarine at arm's length would not only reduce the damage he received, but delay matters whilst assistance was coming. The Red Ensign,

* Owing to her limited resources and her dependence on "everything being all right," to enable her to function according to her design.

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frequently referred to as the Red Duster, was hoisted at the mast-head, whilst the gun's crew—each armed ship was specially allowed two men per gun—manned the gun, and replied to the enemy's fire, though hopelessly outranged.

In the meantime, Struss sent a wireless message asking for help, knowing that our patrols, ever on the alert, would sooner or later turn up. All round our coasts and even as far afield as Canada, the West Indies, South Africa, Australia and China, patrols consisting of yachts, trawlers, motor launches, in fact, any small vessel available, were continually patrolling the seas ready to render assistance when they were required. These ships were chiefly manned by retired officers, fishermen, and other auxiliary forces, and the tales of their doings and adventures would fill a volume in itself.

It so happened that the nearest patrol trawler was some forty miles away, and it was some time before she could arrive; and although she had received the *Manchester Trader's* S O S, she was unable to inform Struss of the fact, so that the latter was unaware that his message had been heard. Owing to the great demand, at that time, for "wireless sets," a good many ships had to be satisfied with very limited apparatus, and often, only one operator.

In the meantime the *Manchester Trader* put up a spirited defence for over three hours. Struss stood calmly on the bridge and, watching the flash of the enemy's guns, he altered course after each shot so as to throw the enemy gunners into

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confusion, thus reducing the chances of being hit ; and he reckoned that he only got about a quarter of the shots that he otherwise would have had. Walking up and down his bridge, on the look-out, first from one side, then the other, he must have chuckled to himself as he saw the enemy throwing away much good ammunition, and to him there cannot have been a dull moment, as his mind was so intent on watching every flash from the enemy. The shells that did come on board, did much damage to the structure of the *Trader*, twisting and bending the stanchions as if they were paper, and knocking bulges into the bulkheads. Very few casualties were suffered, however, as Struss, who was fighting his ship like a man-of-war, had thought of everything, and he had ordered all the men whom he did not require to take cover in sheltered parts of the ship. The only ones exposed were the gun's crew, himself, and a young lad of seventeen at the wheel. This youngster, by name Sutcliffe, remained calmly at the wheel during this long-drawn-out fight, keeping his eye on the captain, and putting the helm this way or that way at his command, to avoid the shells ; in fact, his calmness contributed as much as anything to the success with which the *Manchester Trader* put up such a good fight.

The fight might have gone on till the patrols arrived, but Struss's ammunition supply was limited, and the time came when the gunners reported that they had only a few shells left. The gun's crew decided to make the best use they

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could of these last few shells, and slackened their fire, awaiting the best opportunities for using them to good purpose. Suddenly a real bit of bad luck befell them. One of the enemy shells landed in the stern of the ship, and exploded close to the gun. This was not all, for it caused one of the last remaining shells to explode prematurely. When the smoke cleared away it was seen that the gun had been knocked out of action, and that the senior of the two gunners was lying dead.

This was indeed a misfortune. The enemy soon realised that the steamer could no longer defend herself, and as the *Manchester Trader's* speed was so slow she could be easily overtaken. Struss and his few men had put up a great fight, but the situation was now hopeless—with neither gun nor speed there was nothing more he could do.

Unknown to Struss, help in the shape of a trawler was not far off; had he known, he might have made towards her. Sadly he cast a last look round his battered ship, and reluctantly decided he had no option but to order the crew into the boats, whilst he himself quickly shifted into a dungaree suit, knowing that, if recognised, he would be taken prisoner. It would be quite natural for the submarine to imagine the master had been killed during the fight; in fact, it must have been very surprising to the submarine to see so many men in the boats. As it turned out, when they were told that the master had been killed, they were not at all surprised, and took it as a matter of course.

As soon as the ship had been abandoned, the

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submarine came up close, and after interrogating the crew, were in the process of finishing off the ship with a few more shells, when the long-hoped-for trawler arrived. The trawler at once opened fire on the submarine, also with only a little gun, but with a more formidable appearance.

The submarines were always a bit scared of the patrol boats, as, in addition to guns, they carried unpleasant things known as depth charges, and the submarine, deciding that discretion was the better part of valour, steamed off as fast as her engines could take her. The *Manchester Trader* was thus saved, thanks to her long defence, which had lasted about four hours.

It was unlucky that the trawler could not arrive a little sooner, but this in no way detracts from the very courageous defence put up by Struss and his crew. It is probably as well that he did not know of the close proximity of relief, as had he done so it would probably have led to unnecessary loss of life—as it was, he had fought a good fight against overwhelming odds, and done all that a man could do—and for his services was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

CHAPTER XII

THE CAPTURE OF A JEWEL

"DIAMOND ROCK," 1804

THE name of H.M.S. *Diamond Rock*, in an old Navy List, would naturally catch one's eye.

Of course names of ships are not always what they would seem; for instance, when the names of distinguished Admirals appear in the papers as having been appointed to, or having hoisted their flags on board H.M.S. *President*, the ordinary person's impression would be that the *President* must be some important man-of-war, whereas she is really a harmless hulk which lies in the Thames near London Bridge and never goes to sea. She is, in fact, an old sloop which has been converted into a drill ship and head-quarters of the London Division of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve. A similar example is the depot ship in South Africa, H.M.S. *Flora*, which is a cooking lighter, used for the ships' cooks of men-of-war to cook in when they have their own kitchens (or galleys, as they are called in the Navy) under repair.

But *Diamond Rock* was a little different from these, as there was in fact a Diamond Rock, and she had a naval crew "on board."

The Capture of a Jewel

During our wars with France much fighting has always taken place in, and near, the West Indies, and it will readily be recalled how Nelson himself took his whole fleet from the Mediterranean to the West Indies in pursuit of the French fleet, a short time previous to the Battle of Trafalgar.

One of the West Indian Islands much used by the French was that of Martinique, the main harbour of which is Fort de France, or Fort Royal. Quite close to the end of the island, and about six miles from the main harbour, standing out of the water some 600 feet, is the Diamond Rock. It is barely a mile in circumference, and practically inaccessible all round, except on one side where, if the weather is favourable, boats can make a landing; though even at this beach a nasty surf frequently runs, and, unless boats are specially built for the work, the operation of landing is one requiring good seamanship. Generally, boats are anchored outside the breakers and then backed in, the greatest care being necessary not to get them "broadside on," as, should this happen, they would certainly be filled (with damage to stores or ammunition) and possibly capsized.

At first sight it might seem that this Rock would be of little value to either the French or the British during the war of 1803, so that any idea of capturing it would be out of the question; but it is always the unexpected which happens in war. The Rock was, as a matter of fact, a source of great annoyance to the British ships when they were engaged in

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blockading Fort Royal, because the French ships, making use of the deep water round the island, would often slip between the end of Martinique and the Rock, and succeed in escaping the vigilance of our ships. The Rock obviously couldn't be destroyed or bodily removed, except by an earthquake; the only other alternative was to remove this source of annoyance by something which appeared as unlikely as an earthquake, and that was to capture it.

How to do so was another matter. Even if it were possible for a small body of men to land, they would not have been of much value without guns. An attempt to capture the Rock therefore seemed to savour of the ridiculous, but the Navy takes a long time to decide anything is impossible, and Commodore Samuel Hood, a cousin of the famous Viscount Hood, decided to make an attempt.

It must be remembered that in those days there were no fast patrol boats or long-range guns, so that on suitable occasions, Hood's boats could get as close in to the Rock as possible, or even land a few men. Hence survey work could be carried on with some security, and it is doubtful if the French even suspected that such a thing as an attack was contemplated.

As has already been mentioned, the Rock on most sides was absolutely inaccessible—in fact, on the south side the cliffs fall almost perpendicularly into the sea. The other sides were not very much more attractive with their boulders, cliffs and rocks, but

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there were some caves there which might be of use for keeping stores and ammunition dry, and even for housing a landing party. Anyhow, Hood definitely came to the conclusion that, if he was going to effect a landing at all, it would have to be somewhere on the west side, though the survey had disclosed that, in addition to the dangers that could be seen, there were a lot that couldn't, such as the submerged rocks, a form of danger especially perilous at night.

After carefully considering a lot of plans, Hood decided it was time the attempt was started. In January, 1804, Hood's flagship, the *Centaur*—Captain Murray Maxwell—a fine 74-gun ship, was taken as close in to the Rock as possible, with the intention of mounting some of her guns ashore.

The scheme devised was a most ingenious one. Five guns were to be landed in all—three long 24-pounders, and two 18-pounders—in addition to muskets and equipment. It was known that, if the party got safely ashore, one of the difficulties would be a water supply, and so special tanks had to be built for catching rain-water. What one might call the "great idea" in the landing, was the scheme of attaching one end of a cable or rope to one of the masts of the *Centaur*, and taking the other end of it ashore and securing it there, something after the fashion of the life-saving apparatus seen round our coast.

The operation was a slow one. One does not need much imagination to picture the boats—not

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specially constructed for the purpose, but fortunately manned by good seamen—pulling to and from the ship, day and night. Wet to the skin, and with scant supply of food, the men toiled on, landing their stores through the surf, and then back for another load ; slowly and surely all the guns were got ashore, but not till several days of this strenuous and dangerous work had been going on—and it must be remembered that all the time the men on the *Centaur* had to be on the look-out for enemy ships coming down and interfering with their landing. Had this occurred, the *Centaur* would have been caught between wind and water—but Hood knew that in that part of the world he could rely on good visibility, and that, within reason he would get good warning of the approach of any enemy vessels.

Even when the guns had been got ashore, much more had to be done. The work of mounting those which were to form the batteries at the base of the rock, did not entail such great difficulties (after they were once landed) as those which had to be taken higher up.

A sailor is always at home doing somebody else's job, and this affair of getting his guns aloft was not without an opportunity of displaying ingenuity—besides, it was a change from the more monotonous routine of ship life. Given a rope, a sailor can do a lot, so ropes and tackle were taken ashore. The sailors who landed had to find suitable rocks to which they could fix these ropes and tackle, as there were no ready-made eyebolts as

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on board ship. With the aid of the tackle, one of the 24-pounder guns was hauled half-way up the rock, and the two 18-pounder guns were hauled inch by inch right to the top. There were no motor, or portable engines to help in those days, and even the *Centaur's* capstan, which was used, had to be man-handled. Sheer grit, hard work, and good seamanship, did the trick. One must remember, of course, that the landing was unopposed, and they did not have, as at Gallipoli, an enemy shooting at them all the time.

Eventually two guns were left on top, one half-way down as a battery, suitably called the Hood Battery, and the other two at the bottom. Hood gave his First Lieutenant the acting rank of Commander, and thus James Wilkes Maurice took command of H.M.S. *Diamond Rock*—another link in the necklace connecting together the outlying parts of the Empire. Maurice was given a ship's company of some hundred men, together with a purser and a doctor, also a plentiful supply of ammunition and provisions, his greatest difficulty being the water supply.

On taking over command he at once proceeded to hoist the British flag, and fire a royal salute. From the very beginning he treated the Rock like a ship, and maintained proper naval discipline. The doctor soon set about rigging up a temporary sick bay; the preservation of the health of the crew was of the greatest importance, and although there was a certain amount of vegetation at the

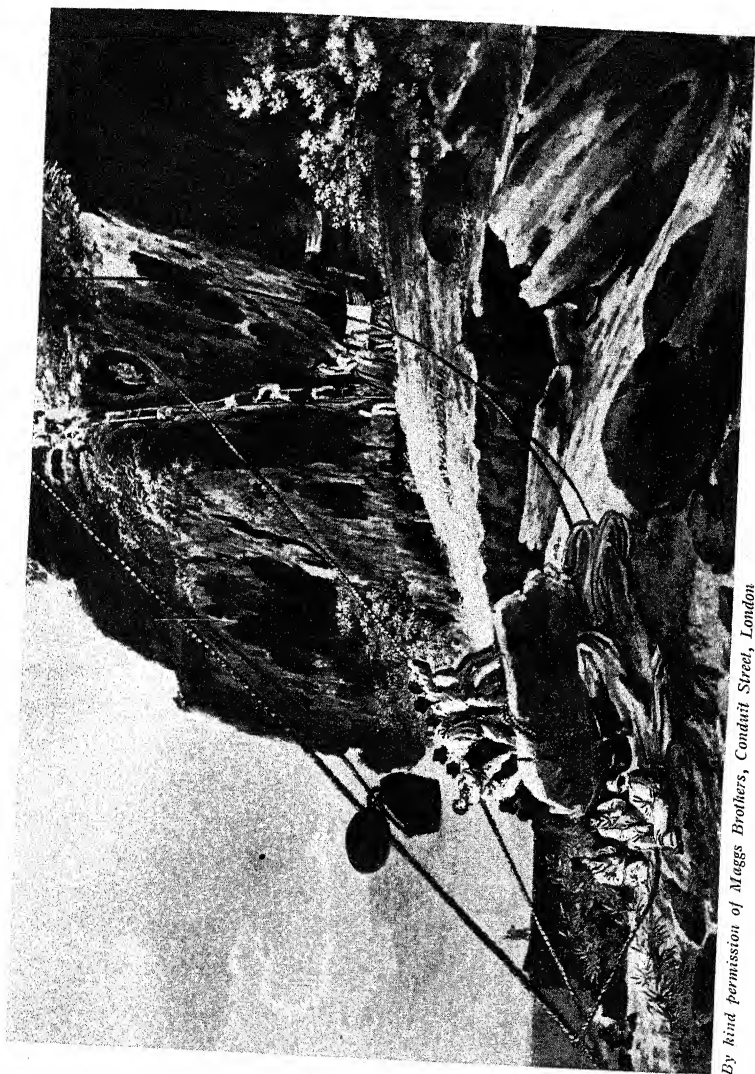
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top of the hill, yet the lack of a proper supply of water, and being so dependent on rain, must have given the doctor many days of anxiety. The caves came in useful, as anticipated, and were rigged as sleeping accommodation for the crew—where they could lay out their hammocks.

When the landing had been completed, and the ship's company landed, Hood went about his business in the *Centaur*, leaving Maurice with about four months' supply of provisions and a sloop of war, which was also available for replenishing the Rock, not exactly as required, but when opportunity offered.

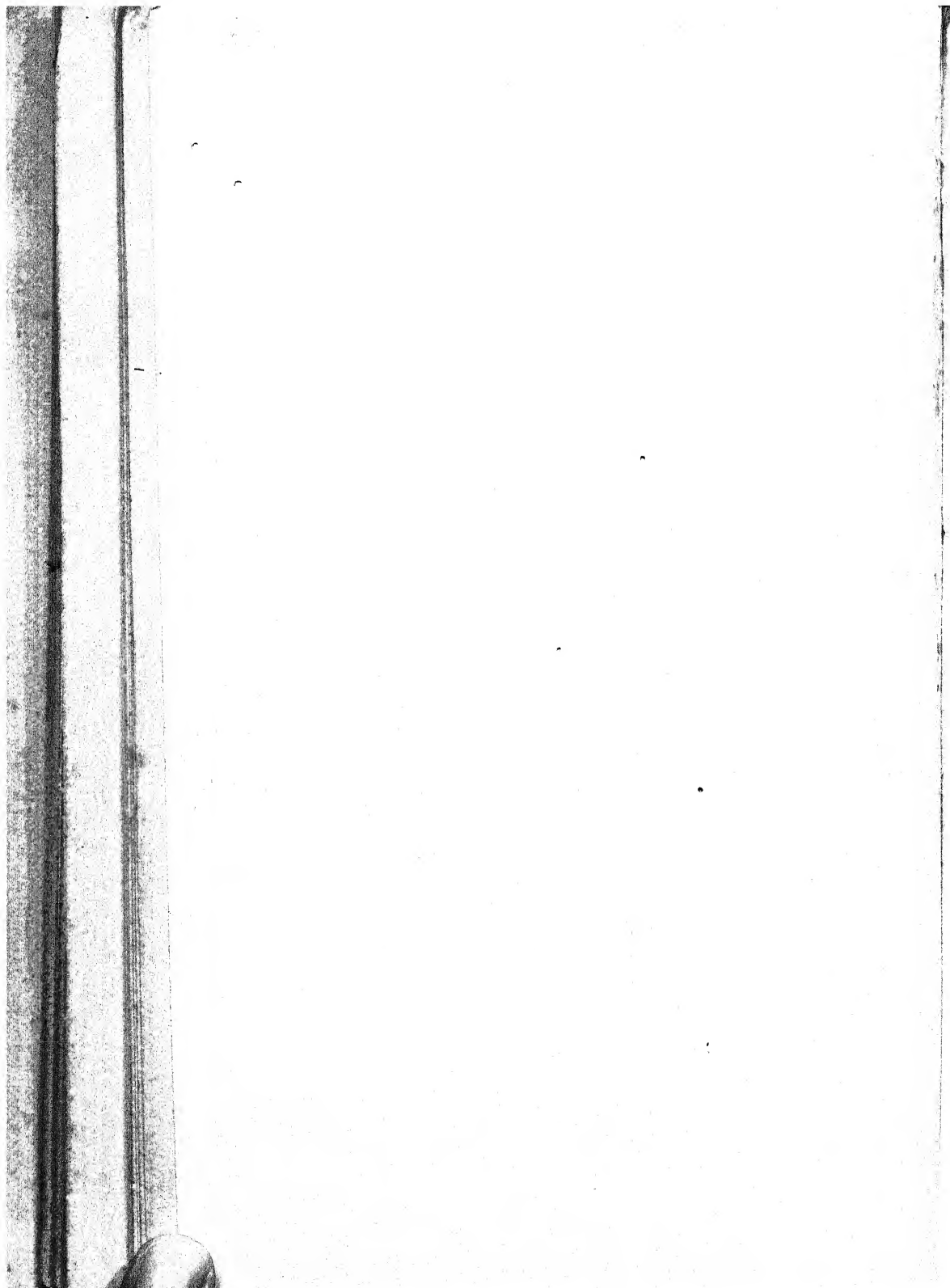
One would like to have seen the faces of the French people of Martinique when they saw the British flag hoisted over the Rock, and realised that far from being a desolate spot, they had one of H.M. ships close at their front door day and night. The tables were now turned, and H.M.S. *Diamond Rock* became a thorn in the sides of the French. Napoleon, in particular, was very much displeased when he heard about the affair, and more displeased that for a long time his ships were unable to recapture *The Rock*—even the big French sail of the line, which approached Maurice's "ship," found themselves at once attacked, though it is unlikely that they received a great deal of damage.

This was by no means the only time that Napoleon found the British Navy a nuisance to him. The Battle of the Nile has already been referred to, and his proposed invasion of England



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LANDING ON THE DIAMOND ROCK



The Capture of a Jewel

was also frustrated by the Navy—the Battle of Trafalgar being the last straw that made him give up hope.

The French fleet, under the famous Admiral Villeneuve, eventually decided that H.M.S. *Diamond Rock* could not be tolerated any more, lying there as she did, through fair weather or foul, within a mile or so of French territory—well within what might be called territorial waters. But a good many of the French ships had had a taste of the efficient way in which Maurice and his men kept guard, and attacked any ship approaching, and it was decided that a “full-sized” expedition would be required to reconquer the Rock. This indeed was a compliment to Maurice and his little ship’s company.

In May, 1805, after H.M.S. *Diamond Rock* had been annoying the French ships for over a year, Villeneuve detached a squadron of two 74-gun ships, called the *Pluton* and *Berwick*, a frigate of 36 guns (the *Sirène*), a 16-gun corvette (the *Argus*), an armed schooner (the *Fine*), and eleven gunboats, not to mention auxiliaries.

In command of this formidable squadron was sent a Commodore Cosmao-Kerjulien, who, in addition, was also given several hundred troops, who were specially embarked. The Commodore sailed on the evening of May 29th, and, although he had only a few miles to go, was, owing to contrary winds, unable to proceed direct to the *Diamond Rock*, and had to tack and beat up against the wind. This gave Maurice, who had

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sighted the squadron leaving Fort Royal, time to prepare to repel this big attack, and he must have chuckled to himself when he saw the size of it. He had obviously been expecting an attack to be made in force, and the variety of the vessels now leaving Fort Royal confirmed his ideas that an attempt to capture his ship was imminent.

The *Diamond Rock* is spoken of in some places as a sloop, in a similar manner as referred to earlier on, in the case of H.M.S. *President*, and what a compliment to a sloop, to have, this regular armada of every type of ship and companies of soldiers to attack her!—a sloop being only a very small and inferior man-of-war.

Maurice had to think out a plan of action, and how best to put up a strong defence. He had great confidence that he could ward off any attack, provided his ammunition would last long enough. After consideration, and consultation with his officers, he decided to reserve his main defence to the guns at the top of the Rock, and so, when on the morning of the 31st the French fleet bore down on him, he ordered the lower deck guns to be abandoned, but before doing so he had them spiked and such ammunition as he was unable to move was destroyed.

The bombardment became a long-drawn-out affair, as the French ships were unable to inflict much impression on the well-placed upper guns of the *Diamond Rock*. On the other hand, Maurice's supply of ammunition was, of course,

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limited, and it was a source of continued anxiety to him all the time.

The attack, which commenced at 8 a.m. on the 31st, went on till the evening of June 2nd, and for the most part was a rather dull affair, as neither side had gun-sights or any suitable appliances for accurately directing their fire so as to inflict any great damage. From the French point of view the guns on the *Diamond Rock* were so well concealed as to form a very difficult target, and the guns of that period were of no use at anything except close range. The loss of life on the *Diamond Rock* was very small, as ships' guns are always at a disadvantage when attacking shore guns ; and also only a very few men had to be exposed at any one time. The French ships had very little damage done to them, but the Commodore, who had determined to take the Rock at any cost, ordered his smaller vessels to close the land and put ashore landing parties on the same beach as that on which Maurice and his men had originally landed—a very daring job and one that cost the French great loss of life, because, as the men from the boats started to land, the crew of the *Diamond Rock*, making use of their height, were able to pour down a heavy musketry fire on them, and also to roll down boulders and big stones on such of the enemy as succeeded in landing below. Had Maurice had an inexhaustible supply of ammunition, he could have gone on more or less for ever—as the ships were doing little damage, and the men below could not scale the slopes, though they

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prepared to do so with special scaling ladders which they had brought with them.

By the evening of June 2nd, Maurice again took stock of his supplies, and realised that he had neither sufficient ammunition for his guns nor his muskets to go on much longer. His crew, too, had had a very fatiguing time, and were beginning to be exhausted, as, apart from the actual three days' attack, they had been on the alert for nearly three weeks—for an attack of some sort had been anticipated, when it was known that Villeneuve's fleet was lying in Fort Royal. But Maurice did not intend quietly to surrender—he intended to make his own terms, and in doing so, to let the enemy assume that he was capable of a good deal longer defence. He therefore hoisted a flag of truce, which was replied to by the French, and communication was arranged between the two opponents; the eventual result, after much discussion, being that his terms, which were of a generous and honourable nature, were accepted. No doubt, as generally happens at peace parleys, Maurice used a good deal of bluff, and probably did not emphasise the fact that his ammunition was practically exhausted.

The terms of the surrender permitted of Maurice and the whole crew being sent to Barbados, and as soon as possible they were taken there—in the meantime the French landed on the Rock and destroyed everything possible, leaving it once more a grim, silent rock.

Nelson, to whom Maurice had to report the loss

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of his command, expressed his high approval of his conduct and of that of the men under his command, and when a week or two later Maurice was tried by court martial, he was not only honourably acquitted, but also commended by the court—which is not surprising when one thinks of a little ship, sloop or rock, whatever you may call her, being defended so gallantly against such overwhelming odds.

CHAPTER XIII

MATTHEW MARTIN

1712

VARIOUS forms of bluff have been used in every war that has ever taken place, but some men appear to have a gift, one might almost say genius, for thinking of more effective ruses than others.

During the year 1712, a fine old sailor, Captain Matthew Martin, was in command of a small merchant ship, the *Marlborough*, belonging to the East India Company; but though his ship was small, he happened to be carrying a large amount of specie on board, and it was essential that he should not be captured by any of the French ships that were numerous at that time off the Indian coast.

The *Marlborough* had a few guns mounted on board to enable her to defend herself against corsairs and pirate vessels, though it was never anticipated that she would be able to use them with such effect against men-of-war as is described in the story that follows. Her voyage took her, as in this case, round Cape Comorin and up the east coast of India to Madras and Calcutta.

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On September 4th the *Marlborough*, when not far to the northward of Madras, was inshore and sailing along with a gentle breeze, when two strange sail were sighted. Martin at once prepared to defend his ship, and even when a little later he discerned them flying British colours, he still kept his ship ready for action, as, for some reason or another, he had his suspicions about them.

At eleven o'clock in the forenoon a third sail was sighted, and, shortly after, the leading of the three ships passed close to leeward of the *Marlborough*.

Martin was able to have a good look at them, and recognised at once that one of them at least was British built ; he could also see on board her a number of lascars, who were generally carried on British ships.

Discussing with his officers what the ships might be, it was suggested that they were probably two English ones, the *Jane* and *Barrington*, which were known to be employed on the coast carrying rice, and Martin thereupon bore down and had a mind to close them, and invite the captains to dinner with him to relieve the monotony of his lonely life. As the *Marlborough* approached, Martin was watching all the time through his spy-glass, for he still was a little suspicious of them and was not quite at ease in his mind. He tried to get ahead of the leading ship, but as the wind was so light he found he was unable to do so, and therefore he lowered a boat and gave orders to one of his officers to go

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over to the ship and make certain whom they were.

No sooner had the boat been got into the water, than a movement in the sails of the stranger aroused his suspicions, and, as he was watching, he suddenly saw the vessel's gun ports opened. Martin, seeing the ship was bristling with guns realised he had been taken in, and that he was up against men-of-war, so he at once made away to escape; he got his officer and the boat's crew back on board, but had to leave the boat behind.

The three ships at once gave chase, and Martin soon realised he was up against a ship of 28 guns and another of 60 guns, but as yet the third ship was too far off for him to make sure how many guns she had, though that she was powerfully armed was obvious, and also that she was the biggest of the three. For the time being, however, he only had to deal with the two closest ships, and with the light wind he thought he had little chance of escape, but he was not a man to give in readily and he had many ideas of escape ready up his sleeve.

By about one-thirty in the afternoon the two ships pursuing were within gunshot, and at once hoisted their French colours and opened fire, most of their shots at first going over the *Marlborough*. Martin in the meantime threw everything overboard that he could, in order to leave his decks as clear as possible for using his guns, which he quickly brought into action.

The French ships soon approached, so that now

Matthew Martin. 1712

the little one was on one side of the *Marlborough*, and the big one on the other, and Martin was able to get his stern guns into action, but this was a poor reply to such large men-of-war, which were trying to rake the *Marlborough* fore and aft with their broadsides.

The firing from the French ships must have been very poor, as the entry made by Captain Martin in his official log was simply, "I thank God it did no damage, only to our sails."

A fresh breeze luckily sprang up shortly after the action commenced, and Martin, making full use of it, and handling his ship with fine seamanship, was able to get out of gunshot of his pursuers.

Although Martin was able to keep out of gunshot, at sunset the three ships were all still fairly close to the *Marlborough*, two of them being only a mile and a half away. During the night the wind again dropped, and each ship got her boats out to tow them, the bigger of the two ships coming so close to the *Marlborough* that the crew on board could be heard talking.

Night-firing in those days was not much practised, and although more firing took place between the ships, few of the shots took any effect.

Martin remained on deck all night looking for any advantage he could gain, and when a small breeze sprang up he cast all his spare masts and yards overboard, as the *Speedy* did at a later date,* in order to lighten his ship, with the hope of

* Chapter IX, part I.

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making greater speed. Throughout the night the chase went on, only a mile or two separating the vessels ; and because of the slight breeze, Martin kept his pinnace out to tow ahead and make such progress as he could.

At daylight on the 5th it fell calm again, and Martin could only get along by the boats towing. The *Marlborough* was soon overtaken by the biggest French ship, in addition to the two that she had engaged the previous day—this ship had in all four boats towing her, and was able to move at a good pace. She came close up under the stern, and by nine o'clock was so close that Martin was again able to use his stern gun, but no sooner had he opened fire than the French ship was towed around so as to bring a broadside to bear. The two ships continued firing at each other for nearly two hours, but again only little damage was done. At 11 a.m. a breeze sprang up once more, and Martin, with his pinnace still ahead, was able to get away from his pursuers.

The *Marlborough* now had two French ships on her quarter and one on her beam, so she was still pretty well hemmed in, but again the weather, and Martin's skill, came to the rescue. The weather had been threatening for some time and it now came on to rain and got very thick, and two of the French ships were lost to sight for a short time, but Martin could not throw off the third and biggest.

Martin intended to make the best use of the weather he could. He first ordered all the crew

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to go very quietly to their stations ready for putting the ship about ; then he went to the man at the wheel, and, offering him a big reward if he acted his part properly, told him, that, when he received orders to put the helm " hard a-weather " (as it was called in those days), he was to put it hard a-lee : in other words, the exact opposite way. In addition to offering the man a big reward, he also threatened to shoot him if he made a mistake. The man had to keep muttering to himself exactly what he had to do, as it needs a little practice suddenly to disobey an order. A man, used instantly to putting the helm the way he was ordered, would find it difficult suddenly to remember to do the exact opposite.

Going on to the poop, Martin hailed the Frenchman as he sailed by him, and suggested they should come on board, implying that he intended to surrender ; at the same time he shouted to the helmsman, " Hard a-weather ! " which, if his order had been literally carried out, would have taken the *Marlborough* alongside the French ship. But the man, remembering his reward, did the exact opposite and put the helm hard a-lee. The crew lying at the sheets were all ready for hauling the yards and sails round, and, much to the Frenchman's surprise, the British ship, instead of coming alongside, went about (from one tack to the other), right in front of their bowsprits. Martin anticipated, by this manœuvre, to throw the Frenchmen into sufficient confusion to enable him to escape before they realised what he had done,

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and follow him. To a great extent he was successful, as, at first, the Frenchmen thought they were going to be boarded when they heard the order "hard a-weather" given. Then, when they saw the *Marlborough* change her tack right ahead of them, they tried to go about quickly, like the British ship had done; but Martin had been ready for his manœuvre, whilst the Frenchmen had not, with the result that their ships were taken aback, and had there been as much wind as Martin had anticipated, they would very likely have lost their masts. Anyhow, the confusion on board the French ships lasted sufficiently long to enable Martin, by this skilful manœuvre, to get nearly three miles ahead. He thereupon decided to make for the shore, and, at about 10 p.m., anchored his ship some mile or so off in ten fathoms of water.

Two of the French ships had again been lost sight of, and the third, which appeared to be following, apparently met an adverse current and was soon lost to view. Martin was able to give his crew such rest as he could, but there was a lot of repair work to be done to the damaged sails and shrouds, and it was also discovered that one of the guns had received a dent which could not be repaired—but in spite of the damage: "I bless God we had none of our men killed or hurt"—to quote the entry in the ship's log. Having made the entry, Martin lay on the hard deck for a few hours' rest and, as he said, "never slept better in his life."

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During the night the weather remained uncertain, with frequent squalls, and Martin, who was awake early after his few hours' doze, wondered what he would see in the way of Frenchmen when daylight came; and he also had a passing thought as to where exactly he was anchored, as there were no lighthouses to guide him, and he was anchored in a spot where he had never been before.

He hoped that anyhow he had safely escaped the enemy, and at sunrise he paced up and down, waiting for the report from the look-out at the masthead; and as soon as anything could be made out he himself went into the main-top. There he found a stranger sight than he could ever have expected. To seaward there were two ships in the offing, but far enough off for him to hope he had not been seen himself, and to landward he could see a large lake or river—but no entrance to it through which he might take his ship. Martin thereupon had one of his boats launched, and sent it ashore to find out "where he was," but the boat returned with the report that the surf was too great to land. Not to be outdone, Martin ordered a raft to be made, which his men speedily accomplished. As soon as the raft was ready, he sent two of his black servants on it as being more used to landing in a surf and they would also be able to converse with the local natives.

By this time it was ten o'clock, and the inhabitants ashore had evidently awakened, for they were now crowding down to the beach,

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probably in as much wonderment as to what the ship was as Martin's as to where he was. Thinking his boat would, anyhow, be able to get within hail of the people ashore and be quicker than the raft, he again sent it in to inquire his whereabouts and the nearest harbour of security.

No sooner had the boat shoved off than the look-out at the masthead saw a large sail coming down on them. Martin at once guessed that it was his old French friend, and that if he stayed where he was he would be sunk or destroyed. Without a second thought he recalled his boat, cut away his anchor, and set all sail in order to get out of the tight corner in which he once more found himself. The French ship—which was in fact the ship with which he had been engaged the night before—had the advantage of the wind and came down with full sail set, speedily, on to the *Marlborough*.

Martin sailed southward, keeping as close to the shore as he could—a bold manœuvre, as he did not know the coastline, had no large scale charts, and the weather was still squally.

About noon three more sail were sighted, and at the same time it was noticed that the ship chasing them hoisted a big blue flag and simultaneously fired two guns. This was obviously some special signal, and Martin thought he would have four Frenchmen to deal with. On he kept, with the Frenchmen with every sail set still gaining on him. Martin must have passed through many anxious moments, as he did not really know

Matthew Martin. 1712

where he was or who were friends and who foes.

To add to his anxiety, soon after 1 p.m. the lookout reported rocks in the distance ahead; on looking further at them, they appeared to be trees and then, when still closer, Martin made them out to be four ships at anchor. He hoped they were either English or Dutch, and decided, in any case, to make for them, so putting his helm over a bit, he steered straight towards them and hoisted his colours—the strange ships replied with theirs, which were French.

Martin seemed to be thoroughly surrounded now, but he did not lose heart, and with the big French ship still pursuing astern, he continued down the coast, from which he was now able to get his bearings, for he recognised Ganjam Roads and other points he knew.

The rest of the day remained, one might almost say, uneventful.

Martin had no opportunity of weather or other circumstances to show any of his special qualities, and there was nothing for him to do except continue his course and hope to get away in the dark.

As the darkness set in, he again had a chance of escaping, though it needed a man with an ingenious brain to make use of it. He already had a scheme in his head and he was favoured by the weather again, because as the sun set a haze came on. Martin closed in towards the shore, as close as he prudently could.

In preparation for his scheme he had arranged

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for a wooden cask to be sawn in half, and one half he had ballasted, placing a short mast in it the same height from the water as his own stern port. On the mast was placed a lanthorn with a "purser's dip" (candle) in it. As darkness came on, Martin ordered every light in his ship to be extinguished, except one light which he had placed in his stern port. Then, when it was thoroughly dark, he had that light quickly extinguished at the same time as the cask and lanthorn were thrown overboard. The *Marlborough* then proceeded with no lights at all. The ruse worked admirably, and the Frenchmen must have been very pleased when they thought they were at last overtaking their quarry.

It so happened that the cask got water-logged and capsized, and one can picture the Frenchmen's amazement at the sudden disappearance of the ship under their very nose.

The last that Martin saw of the French ships was about two o'clock in the morning.

In spite of throwing off his pursuers Martin and his crew still had anxious times and much hard work ahead of them, for about 2 a.m. it fell flat calm again, and once more the boats had to be launched to tow the ship. No sooner was the ship in tow, and the boats trying to keep her shoreward, well out of the Frenchmen's course, than a breeze sprang up again and the boats had to be got in. The breeze was an off shore one, and soon drove the *Marlborough* into too deep water to anchor.

Martin once more had to take a chance, and putting his ship about, tacked in towards the land,

Matthew Martin. 1712

though there were no lights to guide him. Many anxious moments were spent waiting for daylight—at last it came, Sunday, the 7th, three days after they had first met the French ships. Martin once more went to the mast-head, scanning all round to see what would appear out of the darkness. The first thing he saw was another ship. But it was so close to the land that he hoped he would not be seen.

Martin sent a boat ashore, and discovered he was at a place called Aletura. A rumour was deliberately started that the *Marlborough* was going to embark some troops, and engage the enemy again in order to frighten them off. The French knew that they could overpower the *Marlborough* by herself, in spite of the damage her guns had done, but with troops on board the job would be more difficult, and the French had had enough and sailed away and were not seen again. In fact, it is reported that two of the French ships collided with each other on their way back to France, and that both went to the bottom.

As far as Martin was concerned, as soon as he realised he had saved his ship, after a three days' chase covering nearly every imaginable kind of experience, he decided to proceed as fast as he could to Vizagapatam, but, as the wind set in contrary he decided to go to Fort St. George, Madras, to give warning of the presence of the French in order to save other ships.

It is hard to conceive a finer bit of daring,

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seamanship and courage than that Captain Matthew Martin displayed in this great chase. The praise it won in England is best shown by the fact that the East India Company had a special jewel set for presentation to Captain Martin, with diamonds and gold. The inscription on it reads as follows :

“ The English United East India Company rewarded Captain Matthew Martin, Commander of the Ship *Marlborough*, with this Jewel and One Thousand Pounds Sterling, for defending his ship in India three days successively against three French ships of war and bringing her safe to Fort St. George, Anno 1712.”

CHAPTER XIV

SLAVES AND PIRATES

I

"BLACK JOKE," 1830

It is sometimes imagined that the ships of the Navy, or attached to the Navy, are only required when the country is at war, and then only to fight other warships. This is far from being the truth. The ships of the Navy are engaged in all kinds of odd jobs, such as police duties; rendering assistance to distressed people after earthquakes, etc., protecting British subjects in all parts of the world, and, even to this day, dealing with pirates in China. In fact, a naval, or merchant officer never knows from day to day what new duty may fall to the lot of the ship he serves in.

In this book a variety of stories have been related, dealing with different types of actions—ship actions, shore actions, fights with pirates, adventures of merchant ships and of submarines; the doings of well-known sailors, and lesser-known sailors, during both peace and war throughout a long period of years.

But there have been few jobs which redound more to the credit of the British flag than actions

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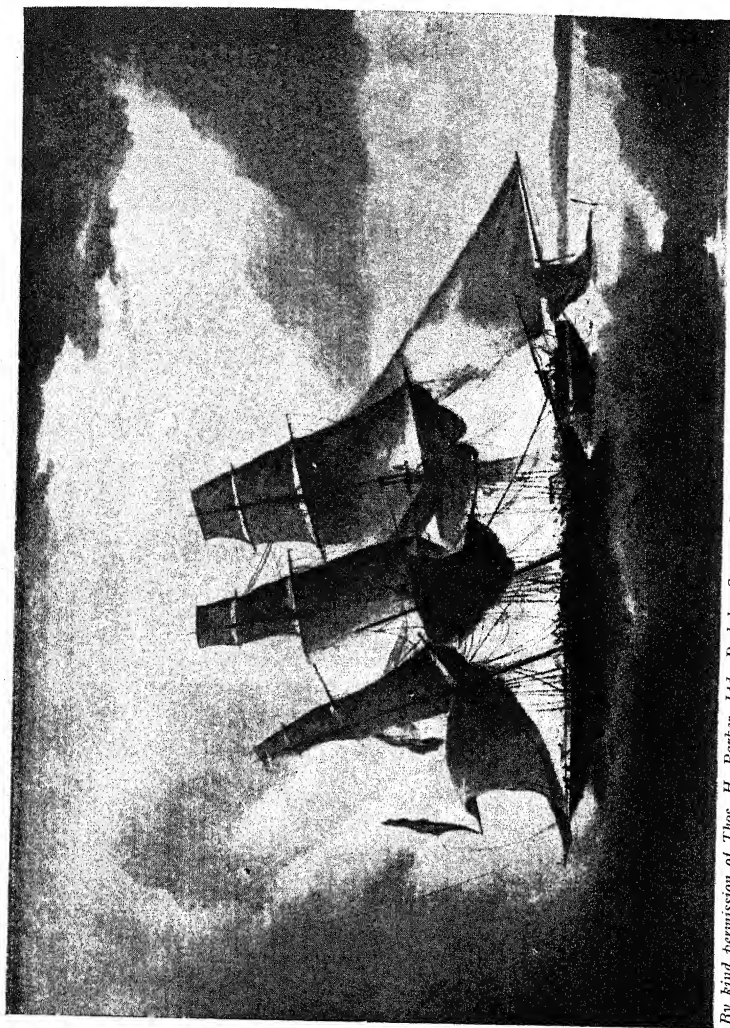
for the suppression of the slave trade. Motives of gain or self-defence can generally be attributed to fights, but in the case of the suppression of the slave trade this was certainly not so.

Small vessels were generally employed on these duties, and these small vessels had young officers in command who required to have great personal courage, a long endurance, and much initiative.

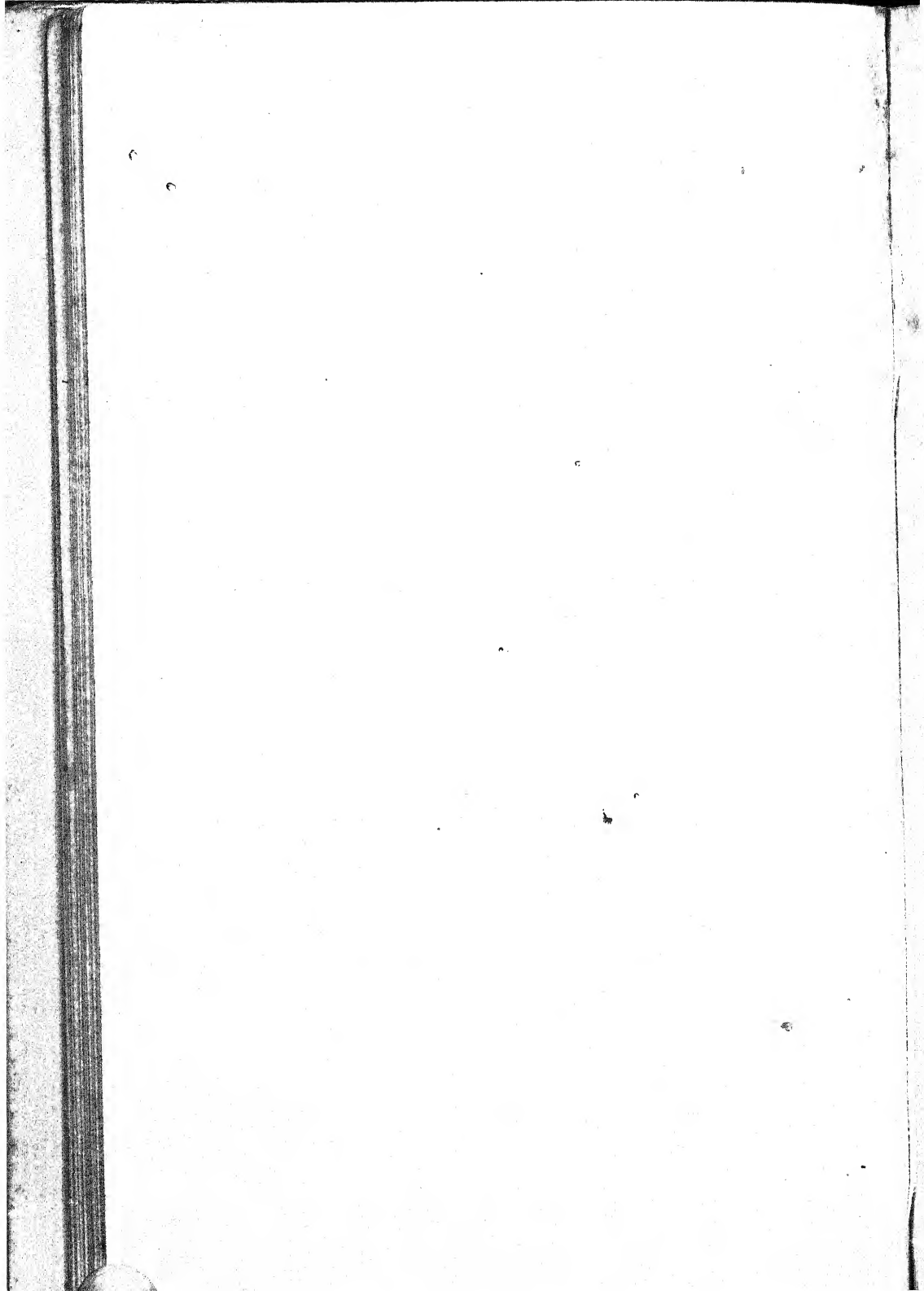
The record of the *Black Joke* (a somewhat appropriate name, and one easily remembered) is but one example of several hundred similar records. The *Black Joke* was a small hired sloop with only one big gun and a crew of less than fifty all told. During the year 1829 she did yeoman service on the West Coast of Africa, and put up many a good fight against a large number of vessels of Spanish or South American origin, and the number of slavers she captured ran into a high figure, and the slaves she released numbered several thousands.

One of her many captains was Lieutenant William Ramsay, who was in command of her in the early part of 1830, when the ship was employed off the Calabar River from where much slave trading took place with Cuba.

Ramsay was an exceptionally zealous and courageous man, and soon instilled into his crew something of his own spirit. Life in those little crafts was no joy ride, as the accommodation was indifferent and fresh food supplies depended to a certain extent on luck. Ramsay was out for big game and so were his crew. Amongst the crew



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THE "BLACK JOKE" IN ACTION



Slaves and Pirates

was a little midshipman aged barely fifteen years, and one can imagine this youngster, new from home, on his first adventure, aching each day to get at the enemy. Each day he would scour the horizon to catch sight of anything that looked suspicious. Midshipmen did the same thing in 1914.

Now, Ramsay and his crew knew that on the run between the Calabar and Cuba was a very powerful and well-known vessel called the *Marinerito*. Her speed was much greater than the *Black Joke's*, her armament about five times as big, and it was reputed that her crew were all picked men. To take on such an adversary would look like courting disaster. There is no doubt that Ramsay believed that, in the long run, it is the man (nowadays woman as well) who wins the war, and that, within reasonable limits, a good crew can make up for an inferior armament, while good seamanship and knowledge can make up for inferiority of speed.

Ramsay got further knowledge about this Spaniard, namely, that she was commanded by a most desperate man with very great courage. When Ramsay had gained all this information, he realised he would have a chance of showing his mettle, and without more ado determined to "take her on."

Having made up his mind, Ramsay sailed straight away for the Calabar River, and, to make sure he did not miss his chance of a scrap, he took his ship close inshore during the night to make certain

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the Spaniard did not escape, and then as daylight approached, he went farther seaward so as not to discourage the *Marinerito* from coming out—not that the captain of the *Marinerito* had much else than contempt for such a poorly armed vessel, but these slave-traders were never keen to fight if they could avoid it, and the Spaniard had to be on his guard against falling into a trap, such as meeting a small vessel which would prove to be the scouting unit of more powerful vessels in the vicinity.

Ramsay had to exert great patience lying on and off the river day after day and night after night, always on the look-out, and always cleared for action. The heat was particularly trying, and beyond occasional bathing, which was risky owing to the presence of sharks, the men had no means of getting cool. If it was a strain for Ramsay, what must it have been for the little midshipman, looking forward each day to being able to write home and tell mother “all about it,” and probably spending his nights with dreams of cutting down niggers—though it takes a good deal to disturb a midshipman’s peaceful slumbers.

The wearing vigil was nearing the end, when at daybreak on April 25th, the look-out on the *Black Joke* reported a ship under full sail coming down the river. Ramsay, at once suspecting her of being his long-looked-for *Marinerito*, gave orders for the topsails to be lowered so as to keep his ship below the horizon, and to remain unperceived for as long as possible. A small ship with no sails set would be as hard to pick up in a strong sun as a modern

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submarine. This was a very cute move on Ramsay's part, as the *Marinerito* sailed gaily on to the open sea, apparently thinking that no ship was about and that she would be able to complete her dirty business unmolested.

It was not till the two ships were only a few miles apart that the Spaniard espied the *Black Joke*, and although he must have known all about her armament, perhaps he had also heard sufficient of Ramsay's character to decide that discretion was the better part of valour. Be that as it may, he at once hoisted every possible sail and made off to escape. Although Ramsay had but little chance of overtaking her, he, too, hoisted all sail and went in pursuit, but his ship was hopelessly outmatched by the *Marinerito*, and he realised that all his hopes of catching her were being dashed to the ground.

But the Clerk of the Weather has played many an important part in actions both by sea and by land—and now by air—one only has to recall the gale after the Battle of Trafalgar, or the mist at the Battle of Jutland, to be reminded of this. So now, on April 25th, 1830, just as Ramsay was giving up all hope, the wind suddenly dropped and the sea fell flat calm.

Sails were no longer of any use to either side, but ships at those times carried sweeps, or big oars, and Ramsay lost no time in getting his out. All hands bent to the oars, swaying to and fro in perfect rhythm, with every muscle put into their rowing, as if to win a regatta—and what a prize if they won!

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The *Marinerito* followed suit, and soon the chase became one of two ships under oars instead of under sail. One would have thought that the *Marinerito* would again have been able to make an easy getaway—as she had a more numerous crew. She also had the slaves and these could be chained to sweeps, and, with a few men over them to lash them when necessary, made to row until they dropped, as had so frequently been done.

Whether the slaves were used or whether they were shut down in the foul holds, the fact remains that Ramsay could see that he was gradually gaining on his adversary.

Spirits ran high on board the *Black Joke*, when as night fell they saw that the distance between her and the Spaniard had been appreciably reduced. The crew, working as necessary in reliefs, and snatching a bite of something to eat as best they could, continued the pursuit throughout the night.

Ramsay had many things to occupy his mind ; to overtake the enemy was one thing, but to get in a good position for capturing her was another. His main object was not only to capture the ship, but also to avoid killing the slaves. To be able to do this would be a demonstration that the British Navy considered slaves as humans, and not as beasts unworthy of being taken into account. But that tactical point could be dealt with later ; meanwhile Ramsay, no doubt fearing that a breeze might spring up at any time, made straight for the enemy, and throughout the night the chase never ceased.

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Daylight of the following day disclosed that the long pull and the strong pull was nearly at an end, for the two vessels were within gunshot of each other, and the Spaniard at once opened a merciless fire. Ramsay, with great gallantry and with high moral courage, refrained from using his gun in return for fear of killing the slaves—an example that it is good to remember when, even in more modern days, liners and hospital vessels have been ruthlessly sunk with innocent persons on board.

The *Black Joke* naturally came in for a bad time, but Ramsay had made up his mind to board, and headed towards the enemy with this intent. As he approached, the exposed part of the *Black Joke*, the rigging in particular, suffered a good deal of damage, but the crew on the sweeps got a certain amount of protection from the bulwarks, and for the time being escaped injury.

Ramsay naturally had an eye on how his crew were faring, as it would have been impossible for him to refrain from using his guns, had they been getting killed. He had every detail of his attack ready organised, and as he came closer and closer to the Spaniard he ordered as many of his crew as possible to lie down, except for the men required on the exposed sweeps, and a couple of men at each of his guns.

The Spaniards must have thought, as in the case of the *Speedy*, that they were being attacked by the very devil himself when they saw the little vessel pulling towards them in spite of their cannonade and without firing a shot.

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Ramsay, calmly waiting the exact moment for his attack, put his helm over so as to crash into the Spaniard, and by a prearranged order the *Black Joke's* guns (big and small) were fired into the Spaniard at point-blank range in order to demoralize the crew in charge. At the same time two men had been ordered to lash the vessels together as soon as they bumped. Ramsay did not wait to see whether this latter job had been completed, but, instead, taking advantage of the smoke caused by the guns, he leapt straight on board the Spaniard, sword in hand, and with his men tumbling on board after him.

Unfortunately, everything did not turn out exactly as intended. So keen had been Ramsay to get on board as quickly as possible, that, when he laid the *Black Joke* alongside the *Marinerito*, the ships collided with a great bump, and before the two men could lash them together they had rebounded and lay apart again.

Ramsay found himself on board the Spaniard, but instead of the whole of his crew being with him as had been arranged, only ten men had succeeded in jumping on board. His position was precarious and might have been fatal ; but as luck would have it, the senior officer left on board the *Black Joke* was the fifteen-year-old midshipman. His dreams had now come true, and he found himself in command of one of H.M. ships and in a pretty tight corner. He at once ordered the sweeps to be manned, and soon got alongside the

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Spaniard again, and this time the men succeeded in lashing the two ships together.

The hand-to-hand fighting had been going on fiercely, the butt end of the muskets felling many a man to the deck. Ramsay himself was wounded, but he succeeded in holding his own against overwhelming odds, hanging on and waiting for the relief which he felt sure would come.

In the process of lashing the ships together several men got wounded, but the remainder, led by the midshipman, tumbled on board to the assistance of their captain. The Spaniards were struck with fear, and Ramsay and his midshipman, seeing this, renewed their onslaught with greater vigour than ever, so that the Spaniards were soon overcome after fifteen of their crew had been killed. Ramsay had many of his crew killed or wounded, but their attack was overpowering, and once more good leadership had its reward, as, although the Spaniards continued to the end easily to outnumber Ramsay's party, they fled below and surrendered.

Thus ended this desperate action, during which all the requirements of a good leader were displayed, and the crew were rewarded for their patience, discipline, endurance and courage. Ramsay must rightly have felt a proud man, when he took his prize into port, although, through no fault of his, in fact, in spite of his fine action, a large number of the five hundred slaves on board were either dead or dying from the conditions under which they were herded together.

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The action of Ramsay and his good ship *Black Joke*, is only one of the many that took place at great personal risk in suppressing the slave trade.

II

A PIRATE KING

1823

PIRATES have existed in the world as long as, if not longer than, slave traders and, unfortunately, they exist still to-day, notably in Chinese waters, where vessels are frequently being held up and ransacked, and the captains and other officers taken prisoners and held to ransom. There are few boys who do not like to read tales of pirates, and, unhappily, it is not rare for the boyish imagination to be filled with admiration and hero-worship for these men who were almost invariably bloodthirsty and cruel.

Who has not heard of the different flags the pirates' ships used? The white skull and cross-bones on a black background, the symbol of death to all; the black flag, used when a murderer is going to his execution; or the red flag, the most common of revolutionary flags, conveying a signal of death to those who do not obey. These flags have flown on all parts of the seas, and many a fight has taken place to haul them down.

Without going into lengthy details, it would be difficult to say what part of the world has produced the most famous pirates. The pirates on the North Coast of Africa were of a very bold and daring

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breed, and one of their attacks is referred to in another part of this book. A fleet had to be sent eventually to attack their strongholds in the cities on the Mediterranean shores. This fleet was under no less a person than Captain Pellew of the *Nymphé*, later Admiral Lord Exmouth, who proceeded in August, 1816, to bombard and eventually, after a most gallant action, captured the stronghold of Algiers, where both pirates and slave traders had, as they thought, a fortress beyond the strength of any fleet to capture. Exmouth not only released several thousand slaves of all nationalities, but also made the Dey sign a declaration to abolish the slavery of Christians for ever. The action, although not a single-ship action, is of such interest that I have included the official reports in the appendix.

The pirates in the Straits of Malacca, and in the East Indian islands had the great help of rivers and numerous creeks to hide in—the same applies to the Chinese pirates. In fact, a pirate is the type of man who plies his trade in surroundings which give him an advantage against all who would drive him out. Ships of the Navy have been employed all over the world putting a stop to pirates' misdeeds, and the story of many stirring expeditions in boats or small craft could be told, in which the pirates have been chased up their creeks and rivers to their lairs.

Of course, if a pirate can get some sort of sympathy or underground help from a Government, then his chances of success are increased in the

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same way that a "friendly neutral" in a great war can be a tower of strength to the combatant on one side or the other.

A situation of this sort had arisen in the West Indies in 1823, when not only did the pirates, who for the most part were scoundrels of the very worst type, get the sympathy and assistance of some of the Spanish authorities, but also the pirate trade and the slave trade were closely allied. The British Squadron in the West Indies was out to deal with both of them, and the Commander-in-Chief had in his squadron several small ships especially attached for the purpose.

Pirates, like slave-runners, soon became famous, either through their successes or through their brutality, and just as there was the famous slave-runner the *Marinerito*, so there was the famous pirate schooner the *Zaragoneza*, commanded by a certain Aragonez, who was one of the most famous pirates of his day, and particularly renowned for his cruelty. Aragonez was a dangerous sort of fellow to run up against, as no one could expect any quarter from him, and one would be lucky to get off with only being shot. It was well known that he had a particular hatred against the British, and he stirred up a similar hatred amongst his crew.

The *Zaragoneza* was a vessel quite heavily armed for her size, and carrying a crew of some hundred men, all as desperate pirates as their chief. The depredations of the *Zaragoneza* became so increasingly notorious, that it was decided to put an end to them, and for this purpose two

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ships—the *Tyne* of 26 guns under Captain Walcott, and the *Thracian*, a sloop under Commander Roberts—were sent in search of her, with orders to destroy her. Both ships were attached to the West Indies Squadron, and they started their search in the vicinity of Cuba and the Bahamas, where this pirate chief operated.

The search was not a long one, for Walcott one morning spied a vessel off Baracoa which looked remarkably like the one he was looking for, though flying a Spanish flag. The flag did not deceive them, and in order not to lose their quarry, Walcott and Roberts proceeded to disguise their ships as merchant ships, a proceeding similar to that of many other ships referred to.

The two vessels, hoping they looked their part, sailed along towards the *Zaragoneza*, and trusted thus to get close enough to capture her. But Aragonez was too old a hand to be so easily taken in, and before very long he realised that these two “merchant ships” were really men-of-war. He at once ordered all sail to be crowded on, and away went the *Zaragoneza* towards the little harbour of Mata ; once inside, Aragonez prepared to defend his ship by all the means his skill could devise. He knew the British ship would be unable to follow him owing to the shallowness of the harbour, he therefore moored his own ship head and stern across the harbour mouth, so as to be able to fire a full broadside. He also landed some of his men with muskets, and placed them either side of the entrance so as to prevent a landing.

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Walcott took his ships in as close as he could and anchored them, but what to do next was a different problem. His task was something the same as that which beset the *Black Joke*, namely, that he wasn't so keen to destroy the ship, as to take the pirates prisoners: Ramsay wanted to save the slaves, Walcott meant to save the pirates—for a more fitting and less honourable end.

Walcott knew all about cutting-out expeditions with boats, and knew that such operations have a better chance of success at night. But despite the fact that it was still broad daylight, he decided to capture these desperate fellows whilst he had a chance, or anyhow have a good shot at it. The ships were, as usual, all ready for landing their men in boats, though few of the sailors can have expected such an order as to land in broad daylight. As so often happens in shore expeditions of this sort, it was an open question as to who should go in command; as Senior Officer perhaps, Walcott should have stayed on board, and taken charge of the ships. He also had no fear of any interference with his squadron, but he felt that he was asking his men to take on a particularly hazardous job, and he therefore decided to lead them personally and to share their risk.

With him he took some sixty armed men. The boats were lowered, and in the bows of the bigger boats were placed carronades, or small guns, all ready for the special method of Walcott's desperate attack. As soon as the guns, ammunition and men were in the boats, Walcott arranged them in

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two divisions, one of which he led himself, while the other was led by an officer from the *Thracian*.

Aragonez must have been amazed when he saw these boats quietly rowing towards him in broad daylight. Perhaps he thought they were still being deceived by the Spanish flag which his ship flew. He must also have wondered why the boats approached at such a leisurely speed, but the slow speed was all part of Walcott's plan, as he was reserving the strength of his men.

As soon as the boats got within range of the *Zaragoneza* the Spanish flag was hauled down, and the black and the red flags hoisted. At the same time Aragonéz and his crew of pirates opened fire on the incoming boats. Walcott had been prepared for all of this, and returned the fire with the carronades in the bows of his boats, and also by musket fire from his marines ; this caused the successful result he had anticipated of partially obscuring the boats with smoke, so that, in spite of the brisk fire from the pirates, little damage was done and the crews pulled steadily on. Aragonéz no doubt laughed up his sleeve, thinking he would be bound to destroy the boats as soon as they got alongside. As Walcott and his boats were getting quite close to the ship, the fire from the *Zaragoneza* slackened, but it reopened with great fury as they got within a few hundred yards. Walcott now played his trump card. In accordance with his prearranged plan, he ceased firing from his guns and ordered all men to the oars. Their leisurely pull ashore now had its reward, as with

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renewed strength the boats dashed towards the pirate, whilst the shots from the guns went over their heads, hardly damaging a boat or a man.

Even then everything was in Aragonéz's favour, because, not only had he far more men than were in the British boats, but he had also taken several precautions against his ship being boarded, such as having the sides greased so as to make it difficult for anyone to get aboard. But bullies invariably get alarmed when they think they are going to get a hiding. The pirates were the same, and when they saw Walcott and his boats coming on and then right alongside, they got frightened and proceeded to jump overboard in order to swim ashore. Walcott had therefore to send some of his boats to take the pirates from the water, and his schemes for actual boarding were not necessary. Probably a good many of the crew would sooner have boarded and had a hand-to-hand fight instead of trying to catch the pirates before they swam ashore.

Be that as it may, Walcott achieved his object in a manner which deserved all the commendation it received. Boldness was the essence of his achievement, and amongst the twenty-eight pirates he captured was the great Aragonéz.

Walcott took his prisoners to Jamaica, where most of them were sentenced to be hanged. Walcott regretted the loss of one of his own men who had been killed, but he and his crew had the compensating satisfaction of knowing they had rid the seas of probably the worst pirates of the time.

CHAPTER XV

BY DAY AND BY NIGHT

I

"*Shannon*" and "*Chesapeake*," 1813

ONE of the most famous single-ship actions which has ever taken place was that between the British *Shannon* and the American *Chesapeake*, in June, 1813. It has been written about so often, both in British history books and American history books, that I doubt if there is anything new to be said about the action. Yet its interest is so great that it is well worth recalling in broad outline.

During the War of American Independence there had been several actions in which the British ships had come off the worse,* and when Captain Philip Bowes Vere Broke (afterwards a Rear-Admiral) was sent out in command of the *Shannon* to the North American station, he determined at all costs to restore the prestige of the Navy. He was burning with wrath and disappointment at the defeats which had been suffered, and from the very earliest days of his command he left no stone

* Anyone who visits the well-known Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland, U.S.A., will be surprised at the number of British flags which are exhibited there as trophies.

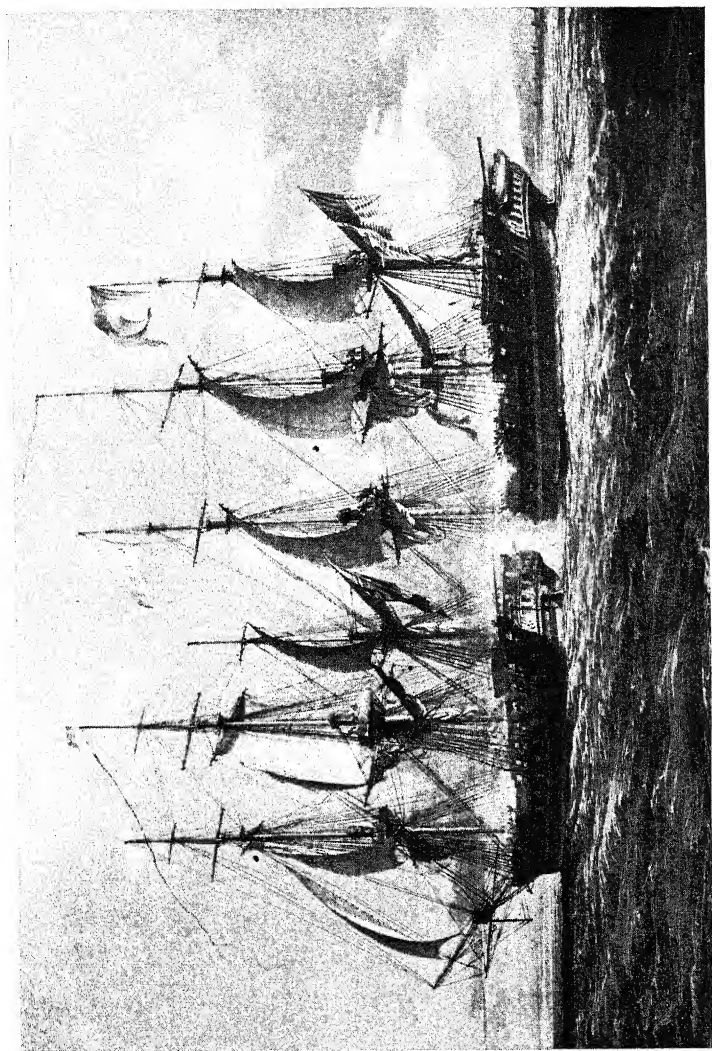
、 Sailormen All

untuned to see that his ship, anyhow, was at the highest pitch of efficiency.

The unfortunate war with the United States, which began in 1812 had found the British Navy greatly superior in numbers and rather apt to scoff at the small fleet of the Americans. On the other hand, there were many British sailors in the American ships, attracted by the higher pay and very often superior comfort. Many single-ship fights took place between the British and American ships, and one can easily imagine that, the crews both speaking the same language, and both having a great deal in common, fights, as a rule, would savour of the old idea of a "duel"—at the same time, if any personal animosity existed, it would most likely be of the worst type.

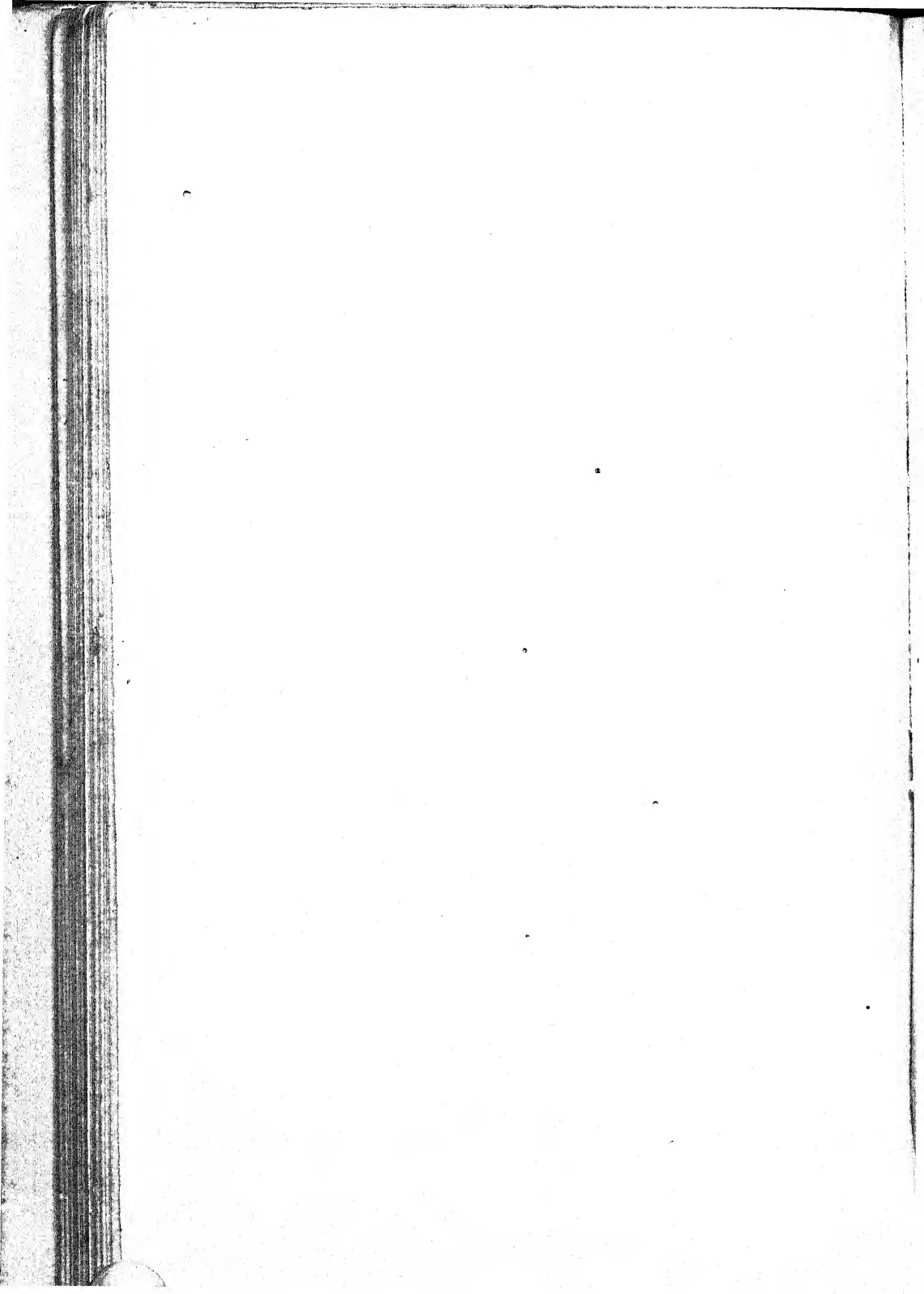
At the time we are referring to, correct and scientific (for that time) methods of firing the guns of a ship, were receiving much attention, and Captain Broke was a man who had carefully studied the matter. Regulation gun drill and target practice were the order of the day, and Broke, who would personally go round the quarters encouraging his men, inspired great confidence. So, not long after taking command of the *Shannon*, he felt he had a most highly efficient and loyal crew, and what was equally important, a crew that knew their job, and could be relied on to do it under all circumstances.

Lawrence of the *Chesapeake* also had a great reputation in his Navy, and had several successes to his credit.



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" SHANNON " AND " CHESAPEAKE "



By Day and by Night

Obviously any action between these two great sailors would be one which would be a very high test of efficiency.

The action between the *Shannon* and *Chesapeake* can well be looked on as a very "sporting affair," and if one reads the official report of Captain Broke, one would think he merely carried out an ordinary day's work ; for instance, he starts by saying : " On the 1st June " (a day already famous in British Naval History) " had the pleasure of seeing the *Chesapeake* coming out to encourage the *Shannon*." These words in his report sum up the feeling that I believe, existed on both sides, though as one side won and the other lost, they may have been expressed in different ways at the time.

The two ships, *Shannon* and *Chesapeake*, were very evenly matched : the total number of guns carried by the former was two more than the latter, but the American ship had a slightly bigger crew—so taking all in all there was nothing much to choose between them.

The scene of the action was set—as a duel might have been. Broke, in the *Shannon*, had left England for North America in the middle of the year 1812, and soon found himself taking part in the blockade of American ports, for the war extended far and wide, and fighting took place in Canada, on the Big Lakes, and, of course, on American soil. In the following year, during the month of May, Broke, together with another frigate, the *Tenedos*, was watching Boston Harbour, inside which were

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several ships of the American Navy. Two of them, the *President* and the *Congress*, were the ones that Broke was specially looking for, but they happened to escape him in a fog. After their escape there were still left in Boston Harbour two very famous ships, one the *Constitution** and the other the *Chesapeake*. The former was undergoing a large refit, and therefore, for the time being was in no way ready for action, but the *Chesapeake*, which had also been refitting, was almost ready to put to sea.

Broke was anxious to put the efficiency of his ship to the test, but, at the same time, he could not expect the *Chesapeake* to come out and fight both him and the *Tenedos*. In order to encourage a duel, therefore, he ordered the *Tenedos* away and remained by himself off Boston. One can imagine Broke saying to himself: "Seconds out of the ring and now for the fight."

Before the *Tenedos* parted company, Broke naturally took from her such provisions, etc., as he required, as he did not know how long he would have to wait for the *Chesapeake* to come out and accept his rather obvious challenge.

Whilst waiting, the *Shannon* was usefully employed in capturing or destroying such small vessels as lay in her path—but Broke's heart was in a stand-up fight with his equal. He sent various messages of challenge to Lawrence, asking him to come out and suggesting that he should select a day convenient to himself, but it is possible they

* The *Constitution* had engaged and sunk the British frigate *Guerriere*.

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may not have reached their destination—anyhow, eventually he sent a very gallantly worded letter by a reliable messenger, in which he carefully described the armament and complement of his ship, and pointed out that they were both probably equally confident of winning the duel. He wanted to try the honour of the flags of the two countries. He asked for a quick reply, as he pointed out that his stock of provisions and water was getting low.

Naturally Broke grew impatient, as day after day he and his crew waited for the challenge to be accepted, and found themselves faced with the possibility that the shortage of stores, and of water in particular, would deprive them of the opportunity which at one time had been so near.

Lawrence may not have received the challenge, but in the meantime Broke, with great boldness and as a final challenge, took the *Shannon* close in to the Boston lighthouse, with his battle flags flying so that all could see him. Whilst his crew were at their dinner, Broke went to the mast-head, and from there was overjoyed when he saw the *Chesapeake* making sail. Dashing down from aloft, he quickly passed the word round the decks that the action was at hand. Dinner was at once hastily finished, the tables stowed away, and the decks finally cleared for action. Obviously it was going to be a duel in public. As the *Chesapeake* sailed gracefully out of the harbour, the shore was lined with enthusiastic and cheering crowds ready to see their champion knock out the British ship,

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and in addition to the crowds ashore, many sight-seers escorted her in open boats, cheering and waving as the *Chesapeake* gathered way.

In the meantime, as soon as Broke saw the *Chesapeake* was well under way, he took his ship out to sea a bit, so as to have a proper ring for the duel, whilst the *Chesapeake* gracefully sailed seaward with her three large "Stars and Stripes" flying. There must have been, to the onlookers, a great contrast in the appearance of the two ships. The *Chesapeake*, straight from a spell in harbour, smart and newly painted, with new ensigns flying from her mastheads, and the general surroundings making the crew feel proud of their ship: the *Shannon*, a dirty-looking British ship, weather-beaten, and hardly looking like a man-of-war, or one to have much fear of. But no doubt Broke and Lawrence, both men of great courage, were thinking pretty hard, as they approached each other, both certain of success, but neither despising the other. Broke had a crew that, except for a few odd men, had been with him a long time and he had trained them to be ready for every eventuality—the crew knew him, too, and had been waiting for this duel. Lawrence, on the other hand, although well known and well proved, had only recently taken over his command, and no doubt was lacking in the personal knowledge of his crew that Broke had.

The excitement on both sides was intense, and by 4 p.m. the two ships were only about seven miles apart, Broke and Lawrence each watching

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the other through their telescopes and manœuvring for positions. By 5.30 the action was imminent—the gunners on the *Shannon* stood stripped to the waist and, thanks to their thorough training, each gun captain knew exactly how and on what to lay his gun. Some guns were loaded with one sort of shot, others with another, and so carefully had every detail been worked out, that, for instance, the captain of the fourteenth gun, whose name will go down in history—Mr. William Mindham—knew, without further orders, the exact minute he was to fire, namely, when his gun pointed exactly at the second main deck port from the bows of the *Chesapeake*.

As the *Chesapeake* was closing her antagonist, she was steering straight for the *Shannon's* quarter; this was an awkward approach for Broke, as, if the *Chesapeake* succeeded in passing close under his stern, she would undoubtedly put in a raking fire which would be far superior to anything Broke could reply with at that angle.

There was little time left now for much manœuvring as there was but a light breeze, and Broke, knowing every move in the game, at once ordered his crew to lie down and remain out of the line of fire. This would offer them some protection until he was in a position to use his broadside, but Lawrence was a gentleman out for close action, too, and a fight to a finish, and at 5.40, to the surprise of the officers in the *Shannon*, they were thrilled to see Lawrence put his helm over so as to bring the *Chesapeake* close up

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alongside the *Shannon* only a few yards off. This was something almost better than could have been hoped for, and every man must have thought that there could be no "walk over" fight, as the crew of the *Chesapeake* were more favourably situated as regards numbers for boarding.

Mindham's chance was soon coming to hand; he was waiting coolly, without moving a muscle, looking along his sights to see when his gun was on the "bull," the crew beside him waiting with equal calmness for their gun to be fired and quickly reloaded.

At 5.50 the tension was over, the moment had arrived, and Mindham fired his gun, all eyes strained to see whether he had made a good shot, and a cheer went up when they saw the shot had made its mark.

This little incident, small in itself, is an example of the high state of discipline and good training maintained in the *Shannon*. As soon as one gun had opened fire, the action at once became general; each ship with guns already loaded, fired broadsides as fast and furiously as possible.

The *Shannon's* efficiency appeared to be a little greater than the *Chesapeake's*, and the long training and constant drill was reaping its reward.

The smoke, caused by the firing at such close range, made it very difficult for the gunners to see the opposite ship, but, on the other hand, they were so close that they could hardly miss. In a matter of seconds great damage was done to both

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ships, as shots of all descriptions wrought their work.

It was only natural that the men in the more exposed positions suffered most, but as fast as the men at the wheel, or in other important posts, were shot down, so others took their places, and as far as the *Shannon* was concerned, there was no confusion. The eagle eye of Broke was cast over his ship, though even the men out of his sight had such confidence in him that they could be depended on without supervision.

Broke naturally thought that Lawrence would try to board, and had all in readiness for repelling any attempt of this sort, as, for the time being, the superiority in the numbers of the crew of the *Chesapeake* would have been much in her favour.

It must be remembered that when the *Chesapeake* gallantly came up alongside the *Shannon* she, by doing so, took some of the wind out of the latter's sails, so that the *Shannon's* speed was reduced, whilst the *Chesapeake* forged ahead. Lawrence had no intention of missing his antagonist in this way, and promptly, only about three minutes after opening fire, gave orders to luff up a little, which had the effect of reducing speed : in present times he would have given orders to "reduce speed a knot," an engineer down below would have slightly closed the steam valve, and the propeller would have made a few less revolutions per minute. Anyhow, the manœuvre on Lawrence's part was a very gallant one, and showed that he had no intention of running away,

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and probably had great hopes of winning this fight which was being conducted on both sides in the very best spirit of sportsmanship.

As the battle raged, many officers and men fell, and rigging, masts and decks were all receiving damage, but it was not till about six minutes after fire had been opened, that any damage was inflicted which materially affected the action. But when the foresails of the *Chesapeake* were shot away a few minutes before six, and at the same time her wheel was put out of action (or possibly the man at it was killed), the action took a definite turn, as the *Chesapeake* was put temporarily out of control, and there was nothing Lawrence could do to prevent his ship "coming up into the wind," which means that her bow was turned away from the *Shannon*, whilst her stern was pointed at her. This was the turning point in the action, and the result was now never in doubt.

Broke, standing on his quarter-deck, calm and resolute, with his eyes in all directions, observed what had happened, saw his chance, and took it. That is the way to take command and lead. The *Shannon's* guns poured a devastating fire right through the stern of the *Chesapeake*, knocking big holes in her, opening up the stern, and enabling the shot to sweep her decks and either kill, wound, or drive the men from their guns. A cask of powder standing on the deck over the stern cabin of the *Chesapeake* was blown up, though this explosion apparently, in itself did little damage. Broke quickly ran from one point to another in

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his ship to try and ascertain the exact situation, which it was difficult to do owing to the heavy smoke, but he saw enough to make him realise that the *Chesapeake's* crew was wavering, and that he now had a chance to take her by boarding.

He had a party of men all ready for this attempt, and warned them to "stand by."

Many things now happened in quick succession. The *Chesapeake* was observed to be drifting astern on top of the *Shannon*, just when Broke had given orders to his helmsman to put the helm over so as to run alongside his opponent and grapple her; he had at once to reverse his helm, thereby delaying the boarding for a few minutes, while he did some more damage with his guns. At almost the same moment the *Shannon*, in her turn, received damage to her foresails and fore rigging, which caused her to go off very slowly, as her foresails were becalmed. The *Chesapeake* fell foul of (in other words, collided with) the *Shannon*, although the former was forging ahead a little, but one of the *Shannon's* anchors became caught in the *Chesapeake's* after port, or what remained of it.

Both ships were in a terrible mess, blood was running all over the decks, and many of the crew of both ships were lying either dead or terribly wounded. The end of the duel could not be far off. Broke, leaving his position in the stern, rushed forward, and seeing that the crew of the *Chesapeake* were now in a state of confusion and leaving their guns, ordered the ships to be lashed together.

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The boatswain of the *Shannon*, Mr. Stevens, an old sea-dog and veteran, who had fought in many a great battle, was naturally the foremost of the party who lashed the ships together. Stevens, regardless of the attempts made by the Americans to stop him from his job, went gallantly on and forfeited his arm, and eventually his life, but succeeded in fulfilling his job.

As soon as the ships were close alongside, Broke, calling on his men to follow him, leapt on board the *Chesapeake*. As he put it in his official report: "Our gallant hands appointed for that service immediately rushed in upon the enemy, driving everything before them with irresistible fury."

The crew of the *Chesapeake* made a desperate resistance. Lawrence, who had been standing on the quarter-deck in his full uniform, was mortally wounded, but remained a gallant gentleman to the end. As he was being carried below he muttered to those around him: "Don't give up the ship."

The mêlée on board the *Chesapeake* lasted but a few minutes. Broke had with him but twenty men when he sprang on board her quarter-deck, until the "second flight" arrived. Swords, cutlasses, and muskets were as usual used in this desperate battle, and amongst the many who distinguished themselves in this fight, and who lost their lives, were some of the very young midshipmen.

Whilst Broke and his men were fighting with their muskets and swords to take complete charge of the ship, the men in the tops of the *Chesapeake*

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were shooting down from aloft, and had to be silenced by one of the *Shannon's* guns. The American sailors soon got in somewhat of a panic, and began to retreat below, but one of them, the Chaplain, showed much bravery, and dashed at Broke to kill him; but his attempt was frustrated, and he in turn was cut down. As the men from the upper deck of the *Chesapeake* started running below, those on the main deck were filled with surprise, as it was apparently the first intimation they had had that their ship had been boarded.

An American, Lieutenant Budd, at once rallied some of the older men, who tumbled on deck to offer further resistance—the mêlée was now fiercer than ever; Broke, standing alone, was attacked by three Americans—he fought bravely with his sword and warded off at least one of them, but was himself felled with the butt end of a musket, which stunned him, and he would probably have been killed—but that Mindham, who, it is hardly necessary to say, was taking part in this affair, tackled the man who was attacking his captain, with satisfactory results, thus saving his life.

Amidst all this din, a very brave and gallant act was quietly performed by a midshipman, Mr. William Smith. As already mentioned, the men in the tops of the *Chesapeake* were continuing to fire whilst Broke and his men were fighting for their lives. Smith, who was aloft in the *Shannon*, crawled along her yard, followed by five men, and they got into the top of the *Chesapeake*, and then

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proceeded to kill or drive all the occupants out of it.

Another midshipman, Mr. Cosnahan, lying on the main yard of the *Shannon*, calmly fired at the Americans in the other top as fast as his musket could be loaded by the few men who were supporting him.

No action could have been more closely fought, and nearly every part in each ship was engaged in some way or another, but it was due to the great personal courage and leadership of Broke, that all the officers and men of the *Shannon* knew exactly what they had to do, and how they were expected to do it. There was no one on board who did not take some part. Broke was particularly upset when he saw two of his so-called "non-combatants" killed—one his purser, Mr. Oldham, who had volunteered to go with the boarding party, and another, his "faithful old friend Mr. Dunn" (to use his own words), his personal secretary, who was killed by his side.

The hand-to-hand fight, in spite of all the detail of individual bravery, could not last long—it was too close and fierce for that. Although the Americans were in a state of confusion, some of the "old salts" would spring to life, as it were, just when the British thought it was all over. Even the men who had been driven below in the *Chesapeake*, came to life again and fired a few shots on to the upper deck, and the British had to fire a volley down on to the main deck to put a stop to this.

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The final surrender of the *Chesapeake* centres round three men who have already attracted attention: Lawrence, whose gallantry one must admire, and whose death was a great loss to his ship. Had he not been mortally wounded, no one can say whether he could not have rallied his men and avoided some of the confusion. Mindham, who, having saved his captain's life and was standing beside him, was the first to notice that the *Chesapeake* had struck, and was able to draw the attention of his captain to the British colours flying at the masthead. Broke, the man who had trained and disciplined his crew, and who had, by his personal example in every way, given a lead of ability and courage to his men, was the direct cause of this remarkable action and victory for the British flag.

The whole action had only lasted fifteen minutes, but a lot had happened in that brief time. As Broke lay faint and bleeding, he must have had the great satisfaction of knowing that his labours, his patience, his inspiration, had not been in vain. So weak was he from his wounds, that he had to be conveyed back to his own ship by boat, as the ships had now drifted apart—in his official report he makes little mention of his own wounds.

So hot and fierce was this action, that a very unfortunate mistake took place just at the very end. Lieutenant Watt, who had gallantly led one of the boarding parties, had been seriously wounded during the fray, but it was he who hailed the *Shannon* for a British flag to hoist on board the

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Chesapeake. The American ensign had been lowered, and Watt intended to bend on the British flag and hoist it above the American one, but unfortunately the halyard got fouled and the American flag was hoisted uppermost; before the mistake could be remedied, the gunners on board the *Shannon* thought that the ship had not yet been captured, especially as the two ships had become separated owing to the stern port of the *Chesapeake* (which, it will be remembered, helped to keep the two ships together) having carried away. The guns of the *Shannon* thereupon opened fire again, and unfortunately killed Watt and several other men.

The action had indeed been short, but much damage and loss had been sustained during that time, the *Shannon* having lost 24 killed and 59 wounded out of a crew of about 320, whilst the *Chesapeake* lost 47 killed and 99 wounded, some mortally, out of a crew of about 380—these figures do not include the slightly wounded.

Captain Broke was made a baronet, a very unusual honour for a captain to receive, but none can say that he did not more than deserve it. No single-ship action has ever attracted so much attention, none has been more keenly fought, and it was hard to say that there was any "luck" about it anywhere—Broke, who never really recovered from his wounds, could justly feel that the success was due entirely to courage and merit.

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II

"SWIFT" AND "BROKE"

1917

IN a war with Germany it was only natural that the guarding of the Straits of Dover should be of vital importance to this country. This was the shortest route for German ships, especially submarines, to break out into the Channel or Atlantic, a matter which may have been overlooked, as, although a special harbour at Dover had been constructed, the base was simply included in the "East Coast Command" until that very gallant sailor, Rear-Admiral the Hon. Horace Hood, was appointed to the command of what became known as the Dover Patrol. Admiral Hood subsequently went in command of a division of battle cruisers, and gallantly leading his line into action, as his forefathers had done, he lost his life at the Battle of Jutland.*

Admiral Sir R. Bacon, K.C.B., succeeded him, and he in turn was succeeded by that very famous sailor, Admiral Sir Roger Keyes, about whom something more is to be said in the last chapter. It was while Admiral Bacon was in command that the events to be here related occurred.

It was to him, as the Admiral in command, that there fell the responsibility of so disposing his vessels, which chiefly comprised small craft, in

* See Chapter II, part II.

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the manner most likely to frustrate the enemy. He could make it reasonably dangerous for big ships to attempt to pass through the Straits, but what about small craft, such as destroyers playing a game of "tip-and-run"? With the Flanders coast in German hands, a dark night would be an ideal opportunity for fast-going torpedo craft to dash into the Straits, attack the shipping in the Downs, make a short bombardment of the coastal defences of our seaports, or "mop up" some of the smaller vessels employed as anti-submarine patrols.

Admiral Bacon had in his command two vessels, the *Swift* and the *Broke*, which were known as flotilla leaders. They had high speed and were better armed than the ordinary destroyers. The captain of the *Swift* was Commander Ambrose Peck, and the captain of the *Broke* was Commander E. R. G. R. Evans, a man who had already made his name in the Service; entering the Navy after a training in the *Worcester*, which specialises in training officers for the Mercantile Marine, Evans had become a navigator and had then taken part, as second-in-command, in the famous Scott Expedition to the Antarctic, when Captain Scott reached the South Pole and died with his party on the way back. Evans had been in command of the *Discovery* when she went back for the party, and his splendid services had already earned him the Order of the Bath and a host of foreign decorations.

The fine, dark night of April 20th, 1917, gave the Germans the opportunity they had been waiting for. The Germans were in the advantageous

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position of being able to select the night and time which most suited them to make an attack, whereas Admiral Bacon and his patrol had always to be on the alert. There were invariably a large number of ships actually anchored in the Downs, in addition to the vessels crossing the Channel, or coming up and going down the Channel, and the protection of all the vessels concerned was one of the utmost importance, far more so than the prevention of a "tip-and-run" attack on Margate or Dover, etc.

On the night in question, a flotilla of destroyers left the German base soon after dark, some to attack Calais and the others Dover. The flotilla attacking Dover came along at easy speed to ensure making no flame from their funnels, which would indicate their position. Our patrols were as usual on the alert in various parts of the Straits, though there was no particular reason to suppose that this night would be any different from any other night; some nights were "duds," others full of false alarms. But to-night at least the *Swift* and the *Broke* were to get all they wanted, and many others were to get "thrills" without action.

At about 11.30 p.m. one of our patrol trawlers saw the dark forms of ships approaching. She, however, was seen by the Germans; they fired a few shots at her, but they were out for something bigger, and started to shell Dover. Those who have visited Dover or crossed the Channel from there, would think it waste of time for a small ship to challenge the famous old Castle of Dover, towering over everything. But it must be remem-

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bered that beneath Dover Castle, now, lay a harbour full of ships, storehouses, and other valuable places which constitute a base. The enemy no doubt had a thought of causing damage here, knowing that the shore guns had little chance of doing them much, if any, harm. They were not particularly worried about the forts, but what about the ships on patrol?

The forts at Dover at once replied; they could do no less, but their chances of hitting were not great. The Germans knew that as soon as they opened fire, the flash of their guns would disclose their position and that some of the more mobile craft would be after them. Their attack on Dover was therefore brief—but a few minutes—and then they once more trusted to the darkness to cover their further activities.

In the meantime His Majesty's destroyers *Swift* and *Broke* had seen the gunflashes, and both of them were itching for a scrap. The alarm was sounded on board and the whole crew were quickly at their stations, on the bridge, at the guns and torpedo tubes, or down below in the stokeholds and engine-rooms, wherever their "action" stations might be. Normally when cruising only a portion of the men would be on deck, whilst the others would be sleeping, fully dressed, either near their places of duty or, if in the "watch off," down below on the mess decks.

All eyes were peering into the darkness to see what was on. The *Swift*, being the senior ship, was leading the *Broke*, and both were steering a

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westerly course about seven miles off Dover when suddenly, about 12.45 a.m., as the *Swift* was turning round, the look-out on the forecastle sighted a dark object a few hundred yards off on the port bow. It was soon seen that it was a ship steaming in an opposite direction. The challenge (a secret signal) was flashed, and in the meantime all guns had been brought to the "ready," and each ship, soon realising that the other was an enemy, opened fire instantly without more ado, and it was soon evident to the British ships that there were several enemy ships present. It was no time for an artillery action, as the British would be hopelessly outnumbered and, in any case, night gun action was greatly a matter of luck. Peck put his helm hard over to ram the nearest destroyer, but he was probably blinded somewhat by the smoke and flash of the gun forward of the bridge, and in consequence, he had the bad luck to miss her and dashed between the enemy lines at high speed. Shells were bursting on the *Swift* and all round, but she gave as good as she got, and as she passed the enemy she calmly fired a torpedo at them. *Broke** was following close astern and firing all her guns, which were concentrated chiefly ahead.

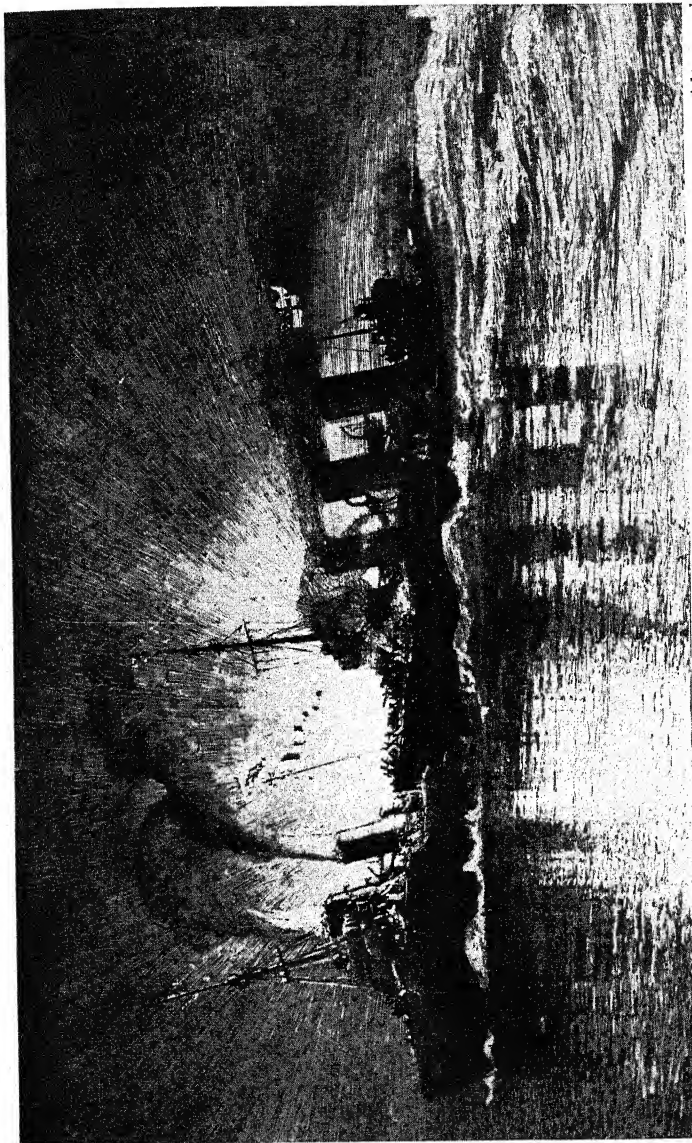
Evans gave orders for a torpedo to be fired as he turned to dash into the fray and ram one of the enemy—he did not particularly mind which—but as he approached the destroyer he was aiming for, he saw her struck right amidships by a torpedo,

* The ship had been built for a foreign navy and had her arrangement of armament rather different from that of British ships—most of her guns being mounted on the forecastle.

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either his own or the *Swift's*, or both. It would be unnecessarily damaging his own vessel, not to mention the waste of time, to ram a destroyer already nearly rent in two by a torpedo, so Evans steadied his helm for a few minutes, then turned once more at high speed to ram the next in the line. "Full ahead" at somebody was typical of Evans. The men on the deck of the *Broke* could see by the sparks which were flying out of the funnels of the enemy ships that the Germans realised what was coming and were stoking up with utmost fury to try to escape—but it was too late. Amidst shot and shell the *Broke* tore like a roaring lion straight at the enemy, and with a tremendous crash steamed right into the midship part of an enemy destroyer, which turned out to be G 42. For several seconds the two were locked together. Ships have from time to time been rammed by accident, but imagine the scene on both ships; each realising what might happen—one going faster and faster to make sure of hitting a blow, the other going faster and faster to try and frustrate it—and then a sudden crash, both ships staggering from the shock.

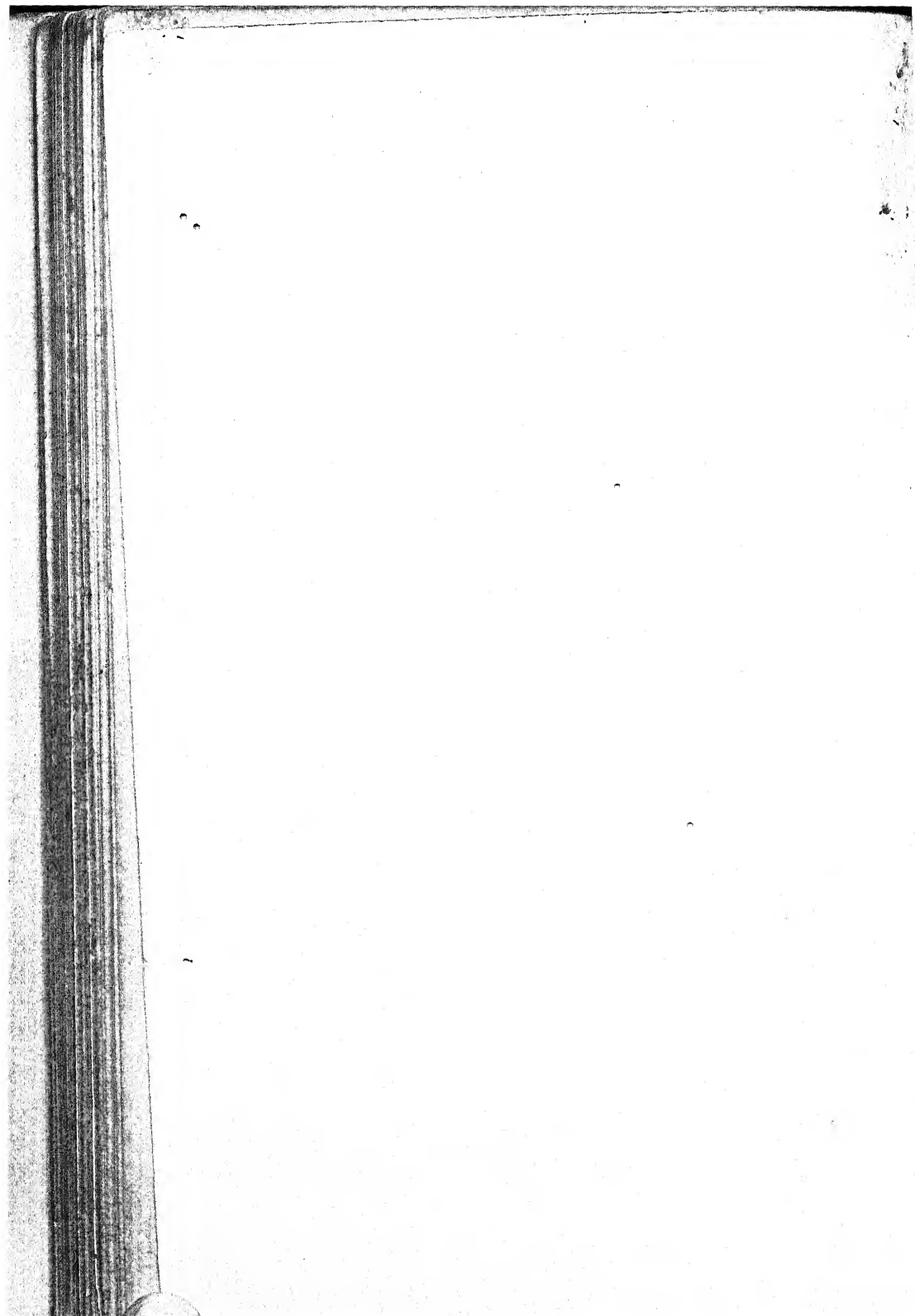
At least the firing had to cease for a few minutes, whilst men picked themselves up from various ridiculous positions. The German had a bad hole in her, but the *Broke*, too, had crushed in her bows, which was greatly to handicap her later. If it had been a friend, it would not have been so bad, though bad enough, but the two ships were enemies, and it was the horrible business of



Painting by Donald Maxwell

H.M.S. "BROKE" RAMMING A GERMAN DESTROYER

Imperial War Museum, copyright reserved



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each ship's company to try and kill the other—so that everyone's first instinct must have been, to see what damage he had done the other fellow and what remained for him to do.

As a preliminary, G 42 was carried on the ram of the *Broke*. The men of the forecastle of the latter ship, under the First Lieutenant of the *Broke*, Lieutenant Despard, got ready to "board" as in the good old days. Cutlass, rifle and revolver were all in readiness for such an event. Evans had a touch of the old-time sea-dog about him, and whilst most of his contemporaries were intent on long-range guns and torpedoes, Evans had not overlooked the fact that in the long run, the man element tells: he always had his ship ready for all emergencies and did not entirely rely on "gadgets."

As G 42 swung round, *Broke* peppered her with shell and small ammunition, longing for a chance to board, but as some of the German crew came crawling on board the *Broke* over the forecastle to surrender—boarding was not necessary.

In the meantime, the next German destroyer in the line passed ahead of the *Broke* and the following one astern of her. Both shelled the *Broke* heavily as they passed; one shell exploding on the fore-castle, blew up a box of cordite, which landed on the bridge and started many fires. In spite of this, Evans ordered a torpedo to be fired at one of the passing destroyers, but he found that the torpedo control from the bridge had been shot away and therefore the torpedo was fired from the local position, but did not make a hit.

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Evans in the meantime was busy clearing himself from the wreckage of G 42, and when clear went ahead to rejoin the *Swift*, which was chasing the retreating enemy ; but the *Broke's* speed was by this time greatly reduced, as, in addition to the damage done to the bows, a shell had exploded in one of the boiler-rooms and damaged the main steam pipe.

No fight has ever been told as it happened from second to second as to what happened in every part of a ship.* Even in the "good old days," when things did not happen so rapidly as they do now, captains were unable to see at a glance or realise accurately all that was going on in various parts of the ship when death (or, as often as not in more modern days, electrical defects) had caused a breakdown in "communications." Evans on his shattered bridge did not, and could not, know all that had been happening in other parts of his ship. The only thing he did know, was that another enemy destroyer was at hand, and he at once turned to ram it, but with his loss in speed was unable to do so.

The *Broke* was in a bad way and had no chance of overtaking the enemy, which were rapidly disappearing into the darkness, closely followed by the *Swift*. Evans and his gallant crew had to resign themselves to their fate, though the fact that they were unable to speed the parting guest as they

* It is doubtful if it ever can be, as men's impressions immediately after an action are sometimes confused and also many little incidents occur which they dare not relate till they are demobilised. This I know as a fact.—AUTHOR.

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would have liked to have done, did, not mean that their job was yet over.

The *Broke* was on fire in many places, steam was hissing out of the damaged pipes, and the dead and wounded were lying all around her decks. Evans, full of dash as ever, still wanted to go on after the enemy, but steam was growing less and less and his ship was gradually coming to a standstill. Further pursuit was out of the question, and as he insisted on getting as close to the enemy as he could, he decided to turn round and see what had become of the damaged enemy ships.

The fire guided him to them and he found them both in a helpless condition, one sinking and the other in flames—but they showed no signs of surrender, and one of them, in a sort of last gasp, opened fire on the *Broke*. Evans at once ordered the fire to be silenced, an order promptly carried out.

The *Broke* had now lost practically all steam and had stopped quite close to the flaming enemy destroyer—in fact, the bow of the *Broke* was practically touching that of the enemy. It passed through Evans's mind that the magazine on board the enemy might blow up at any minute, in which case his own ship, already severely mauled, would be in imminent peril. He sent for his Chief Engineer. He knew that the engineers of H.M. ships never failed, and sure enough he was right, as the stokers managed to get just sufficient steam to go slowly astern clear of the danger of being blown up.

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In the meantime, the *Broke* fired another torpedo at the enemy ship, which apparently took suitable effect in the stern, but in a night action of this sort it would be extremely difficult to say exactly what happened, as, for instance, the explosion of a magazine would appear in much the same way as the explosion of a torpedo. Evans all the time was on the look-out for any more enemy vessels approaching, and was in readiness for another action ; in spite of his crippled condition most of his guns were still able to be used, which was the main thing. Suddenly a destroyer was seen coming out of the darkness. At first Evans had been unable to reply to the challenge, made by flashlight, as all the *Broke's* electric circuits had been destroyed, but the signalman, not lacking in resource, found an electric torch, which did the trick, and as the destroyer, or as she was officially classed, flotilla leader, turned out to be the *Swift*, all was well.

Soon after this, another destroyer, H.M.S. *Mentor*, arrived from Dover, and going alongside the *Broke*, helped to keep her clear of the still burning destroyer, until the latter sank. In the meantime, the *Swift* had closed the remains of G 42 and saved as many of the survivors as she could.

The action was now over, and in spite of the overwhelming numbers of the enemy, two had been sunk and the remainder put to flight. The *Broke* had done most of the damage and received most of the punishment. The *Swift* had received

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a bad hit in the fore-castle and had had 1 killed and 4 wounded, whilst the *Broke*, in addition to being severely damaged in nearly every part of the ship, had lost 21 killed outright, 2 died of wounds and 34 wounded; this out of a small ship's company of barely a hundred was a great number and in itself shows the fierceness of this close action. The Germans had 140, officers and men, taken prisoners.

The *Broke* was taken in tow by two tugs sent out from Dover. The crew, ever proud of their captain and ship, saw to it that their ship looked as trim as possible for entering harbour. They reverently covered their dead comrades with ensigns and then removed all blood-stains, and as the scar-covered ship was towed slowly through the breakwater her survivors proudly responded to the cheers of all ships in harbour.

The Germans had learnt that the "tip and run" game was a dangerous one. Both Peck and Evans were specially promoted to the rank of Captain and received the Distinguished Service Order. Had they lived a generation before they would have been knighted. Many officers and men also received decorations for distinguished service in this memorable action, but perhaps none deserved an honour more than Able Seaman W. G. Rawles, of the *Broke*, who, in spite of a great number of wounds, remained at the helm of the *Broke*; he realised, in spite of his sufferings which he gallantly bore, that it is the "Man at the Helm" who counts.

CHAPTER XVI

THE LONG, LONG TRAIL

I

BENIN, 1897

FOR many generations, the uncivilised inhabitants of the world have from time to time taken part in unprovoked attacks on peaceful white people, and from time to time it has been necessary to take immediate steps to punish the wrongdoers and to restore law and order. Expeditions for this purpose are generally referred to as punitive expeditions and have almost invariably required the assistance of the Navy to carry them out, that having been until quite recently the most mobile force at our command. The exceptions have, of course, been the hill tribes in the north of India, which had to be dealt with entirely by the Army, though it is not generally known that the Navy, landed brigades, which took part in the Indian Mutiny, the Crimea, and the South African Wars.

Since the evolution of an Air Force, these expeditions can, as a rule, more efficiently and cheaply be carried out by aircraft; yet as the naval expeditions become matters of history one

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can well afford to spend a little time indulging in recollections of bygone days, and in marvelling at the way the handyman has adapted himself to a variety of surroundings, far removed from the normal routine of a naval life. The name "handyman" has been given to sailors, because of their record of being ready to rise to any occasion and to fill the breach whenever required, and may they long live up to it !

A typical naval punitive expedition took place in 1897 on the West Coast of Africa. For many years the natives in the vicinity of the Benin River had been giving trouble, chiefly by acts of piracy, and some of Her Majesty's (Queen Victoria) ships had been sent there, with four members of the diplomatic service on board, to try and settle matters by peaceful means, though without a great deal of success. A more serious situation arose in January, 1897, when a peaceful mission of British officers, including our Acting Consul-General, Mr. J. R. Phillips, were on their way to Benin, the capital, where a king reigned who was held responsible for everything that took place in his territory. The fact that he was black was of no import, as in the British Empire the colour of a person does not deny him or her the rights of a British subject or the dignity of a king, if he is so born, always provided that he behaves himself as a British subject should do.

The mission referred to consisted of eight white men and some native carriers. When about twelve miles from Benin, and whilst they were going

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through the bush, they were suddenly attacked by a horde of the King of Benin's forces, and all except two were brutally massacred. The bush through which they were going was exceedingly thick and the natives had lain concealed near the track they knew the party would have to follow; then they suddenly leapt out of the bush like wild animals. As soon as the news reached the coast and was telegraphed to England, immediate steps had naturally to be taken to punish the offenders, and to prevent such a revolt spreading. Neither wireless, aeroplanes, nor even motor transport were known in those days, and to send an army from England or even Gibraltar would take far too long a time, as, especially when dealing with native risings, immediate action is essential. What about the Navy taking on the job?

Rear-Admiral Sir Harry Rawson, with his flag in the cruiser *St. George*, was the Commander-in-Chief of the Africa station. He had already made his name in the Navy and had taken part in previous land operations such as Tel-el-Kebir. He fortunately happened to be at Simonstown, the naval port not far from Cape Town, when the attack took place. He received immediate orders by telegram to take steps to capture Benin City or destroy it, whichever might be more suitable. The King of Benin was also to be captured if possible—this latter order was, of course the one that tickled the sailors most.

Rawson received the orders on January 13th at his charming house in Simonstown, which, built

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in the Dutch fashion, overlooks the sea and harbour on one side and is overlooked by the mountains on the other. He started to assemble his force without delay. The ships which were at Simonstown, at once, although always ready for instant action, commenced to embark the extra ammunition and stores which would be required for the expedition; the dockyard buzzed with excitement for a few days whilst this was being carried out. The Mayor of Simonstown, Mr. Runciman, was especially conspicuous in his endeavours to give every facility to the squadron.

The "rendezvous" was off the Brass and Benin rivers, where by the end of the month Rawson had assembled the ships of his own squadron, cruisers and gunboats, consisting of the *St. George*, *Philomel*, *Phoebe*, *Barrosa*, *Widgeon*, *Magpie* and *Alecto*. In addition to these ships, the Admiralty had sent the two cruisers, *Theseus* and *Forte*, from the Mediterranean Fleet to join him, and by February 3rd the whole of Rawson's command was assembled. As fighting ships they had, of course, no enemy to engage, but the personnel and equipment normally carried in men-of-war were all important. The total number of officers and men carried in the ships was just over 2,100.

In building men-of-war, the most important considerations are, first, armament and protection for engaging ships of similar class of any nation; second, capability of service all over the world and long endurance at sea, which means the devotion of great space to the storage of coal. In

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consequence, the living accommodation left available for the officers and men has been strictly limited, ventilation, light and comfort being of minor consideration.

These facts need to be realised when one thinks of this squadron being assembled at one of the hottest places in the world. Refrigerators, ice-making machines and electric fans were not supplied in those days, and the crews had to content themselves for the most part with bully beef and biscuit, and at night they would sleep as best they could on the hard decks in the open air. Speed in the expedition was necessary from many points of view, but none so much as that of keeping the crews healthy in this dreadful climate—not only on board the ships, but also when they landed and had to go through the marshes and bush in an African climate.

Rawson had carefully worked out his scheme of operations beforehand, so as to ensure success with the greatest rapidity. He divided his forces into three, and intended to command the main column himself, with his Flag-Captain Egerton as Chief of the Staff. This idea of the Admiral in command actually landing was the one carried out by Nelson at Teneriffe*, but the circumstances were slightly different in that Rawson had no chance of his squadron being attacked by hostile ships.

In addition to the men from his squadron, he had at his disposal about two hundred and fifty

* See Chapter I.

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native troops of the Niger Coast Protectorate, under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Bruce Hamilton, whom he attached to his main column. These native troops, well disciplined and fine-looking men, were a very great asset, as they were used to the climate and were able to stand the heat and fatigue more readily than the white men.

As soon as the ships started assembling, the crews got busy landing stores, arms and equipment for this inland expedition, and a base was formed at Warrigi. Each of the bigger ships carried on board a steamboat which assisted in towing the launches and pinnaces ashore, carefully laden as they were with the stores and ammunition arranged in the order they would be required. At the same time a large number of native carriers had to be obtained and the last details of the expedition organised.*

By February 9th all was ready, and Rawson gave the orders for his landing parties to disembark, the total number landed being twelve hundred officers and men. The main body, which was to march to Benin, assembled at Warrigi. At the same time the second party, under Captain O'Callaghan, was to occupy a place called Guato, on the creek of that name, and the third party, under Captain Macgill, was to occupy Sapobar on the Jamieson River. The principal object of the two parties under Captains O'Callaghan and Macgill was to act as a diversion and to take the enemy's attention

* Of course nowadays motor-lorries or something of that sort would be easily obtainable to make the question of transport an easier task.

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off the main force, but also to capture any of the King of Benin's forces that might try to escape. Both these secondary forces met with a certain amount of opposition and much firing, though little damage was done and the sailors and marines quickly overcame the resistance.

Rawson, in the meantime, started his advance as soon as he could, and by the 11th had got to a place called Ari, where he found it necessary to put his men into surf boats to be taken two miles up a creek to Ologbo, a small and dirty native village, with women scantily clothed and naked little children with fat tummies and big eyes staring with wonder at the British seaman arriving with his white helmet on, white jumper and trousers, brown gaiters, and thick black purser's (paymaster's) boots. From the rifles slung over their arms and heavy accoutrements on their back, it was soon realised, that the Great White Queen had sent them, on one of her errands. The village was not occupied without resistance, and although the natives had no modern rifles or quick-firing guns, yet with such rifles as they had, combined with spears, pikes and assegais, several hours were spent in driving back the enemy. Many officers and men were wounded during this part of the operations, and owing to the great heat and limited supply of medical comforts suffered great pain and discomfort.

By the 14th the two parties, under O'Callaghan and Macgill, had occupied their positions and "dug themselves in," so that Rawson was now

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able to start with the main advance. He sent a small flying column ahead, composed chiefly of his native troops, so as to clear the way for his main party. The advance had to be made through the thick bush and there was only a vague track on which to proceed. The party were, of course, as already mentioned, rigged out in the most suitable kit available, including their helmets and gaiters, the latter being most important because of the danger of snakes, nearly all parts of Africa being infested with these extremely dangerous reptiles.

A running fight took place all the time and continual sniping went on, as the enemy, who knew the country well, were able to conceal themselves with the greatest ease. It is extraordinary the way natives can go through the thickest bush, which may appear to a white man to lead nowhere, and yet the native will turn up at the exact spot, be it a well or a village, as if he had been walking down a public thoroughfare.

The sailors frequently replied to the sniping with volley firing, and undoubtedly put fear into the enemy, even if they did not inflict great casualties. After two days of this advance in intolerable scorching heat, the village of Agagi was reached, where it was known that wells existed, and where a good water supply could be expected, water being one of the greatest necessities on an expedition of this sort. But when Colonel Bruce Hamilton, who was in advance, got there, he found to his consternation that even the wells were dry. This was a bad setback, and for a moment it must

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have passed through the minds of many that the advance would not be able to go on, but Rawson faced the hard facts with resolution, and gave immediate orders to meet the situation. One only has to picture the sort of country these sailors were going through to realise that every moment was of importance if the breakdown of the expedition through ill-health, apart from anything else, was to be avoided. In addition to the terrific heat, the swamps, with their breeding grounds of mosquitoes and other deadly insects, had to be thought of.

The water available had to be strictly rationed : two quarts per day for each white man and native trooper, and only one quart for each carrier, was the order. The carriers were much exhausted, yet, on the other hand, they were far more able to exist on a lower ration than those who were not used to the climatic conditions.* Rawson also decided to go on with a sort of " death or glory squad " of about five hundred and sixty marines and sailors, together with some eight hundred carriers, taking with them three days' water supply and four days' provisions.

The advance continued at what must have been a laborious speed, through dense forest in sweltering heat, fighting all the way, for the snipers gave them little rest—which was just as well, for it kept away the feeling of fatigue and made the sailors all the more keen to reach the city of Benin,

* When the author was shooting in the wilds of Southern Rhodesia he was told that either he should drink a cup of water every hour or practically none at all. He selected the former and when his party came to a well that was dry he had first-hand experience of the torture the want of water in a tropical heat can cause.

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where each man was no doubt hoping to be the lucky one to capture the king. At the same time, being fired on all day long is apt to be trying to anyone's nerves ; but the spirit of the sailors under their gallant leader carried them along.

By the afternoon of the 17th Rawson's party had reached the little village of Awoko, not far from Benin, and no doubt the king's messengers and spies were able to carry to him all the latest news of the advance, with the exact details of the strength and composition of Rawson's forces.

Had they been able to take guns with them, as could be done nowadays, the town could have been comfortably destroyed in a very brief time. As it was, they had to advance slowly through this and the following day, and put up with the ding-dong firing. Although the casualties were not alarming, men were being shot dead or wounded all the time ; but these casualties only spurred on the rest and they were eagerly awaiting the final charge. Every sailor is taught in his preliminary training before he goes to sea, how to fix a bayonet, and then to charge and cheer—being generally instructed, that the cheering is necessary to drown the groans of the dead and the dying !

By the afternoon of the 18th the party was at the gates of Benin, a walled-in city, and for the first time they could see the enemy moving about in the open. The last march had started at 6.30 a.m., and the party had been under fire over five hours in a heat, which in itself was enough to knock out any except the strongest, yet when

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the "Advance" was sounded they were all ready to go on. The "Advance," an ordinary bugle call, is one that marines and sailors often wait for—the occasion of its being sounded is not of very much importance; for instance, it is generally sounded when the hands have been piped to bathe (in the sea) and is their executive permission to enter the water. Sailors "don't care," and once the advance is sounded, it means they can go full-speed ahead, whether it be into the water or against hostile tribes.

The city of Benin was defended by several old-fashioned guns—old but disagreeable enough to advance against, and they were the cause of many more casualties. The party never wavered, and, except for brief "stand easys," another thing very dear to a seaman, well spread out and taking such cover as they could, they gradually worked their way into the city. The Benin people soon realised that further resistance was useless, as the sailors came on in wave after wave. Their resistance was eventually overcome, the people surrendered and Rawson captured the whole city.

Alas! the black, woolly-haired king had fled in a most undignified manner. But what a sight and what a smell awaited the party. The place literally stank of the dead and dying, for during the advance the most inhuman sacrifices had been going on with the superstitious hope of delaying the attack. Pits were found into which dead and dying had been thrown together.

As soon as the city had been occupied, imme-

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diat measures were taken to place it in a state of safety and defence. Sentries were placed at all the most important points, and a quick search was made to ensure there being no concealed arms or weapons about. But it was no place for the expedition to remain long, as the unhealthy conditions of the city were such as to make it almost uninhabitable for white men. The provisions and water supply were still limited, and then, to make matters worse, a fire broke out, and although it burnt much that was undesirable, it also burnt a good deal of the provisions, which was a most serious blow.

Rawson decided he must evacuate his white men as soon as possible, but he had to leave the city occupied, and so, making use again of his native troops, who had already done yeoman service, he left them in charge of the town, and he with his sailors started on the 22nd on their return journey. The return was worse than the advance. There was no more sniping, it is true, and the men had the satisfaction of knowing that something had been accomplished, but the task of carrying the wounded and sick in stretchers or hammocks in the terrible heat, through jungle and swamps, was appalling. It always takes a better man to go back than to go forward.

Rawson's forces in all had three officers and eight men killed and nearly fifty wounded. The weary march at last had its ending, and eighteen days after leaving their ships the sailors and marines re-embarked. The severest penalty for

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their pluck and endurance had to be paid later, when much fever broke out amongst the men who had taken part in the landing. Nearly anything can be proved by statistics and not too great reliance can be placed on them, as it depends so much on how they are worked out and what they intend to prove, but according to one authority no less than two thousand two hundred and ninety cases of fever were attributable to the expedition—that is to say, every man of the landing party suffered and others of the crew as well.

Rear-Admiral Rawson was made a Knight of the Order of the Bath, a reward which was more than earned, when one thinks of the fact, that he had not the modern facilities of communication and transport. From when he received his orders on January 15th, to the time his forces re-embarked on February 27th, was little over a month—a remarkably fine feat. When the sailors came to talk about it afterwards, they had many good yarns to tell, and I have little doubt that imaginative lions and wild beasts came into the picture—but the two things they had enjoyed most were setting off to put a king in his place, and more still, “being out of routine.”

II

TANGANYIK.

1915

THE Great War with the German Empire extended to the farthestmost ends of the earth—if either the

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Germans or British could have scored a point off each other at the North Pole or South Pole they would have done so—but as a matter of fact, both these regions were “out of the ring.” A few days after the war broke out a little ship sailed out of Plymouth with Sir Ernest Shackleton in command; he was off on one of his Antarctic expeditions which have made him famous and which cost him his life. Shackleton had suggested postponing his adventure and placed himself at the disposal of the Navy. The Admiralty replied, “Carry on,” and away he went, far out of the reach of the Germans, a signal tribute to the far-flung influence of the British Navy, as had the Germans wished to interfere with Shackleton they would have done so if they could.

In the heart of Africa lies Lake Tanganyika. For many years German ships had sailed on this inland sea unmolested—why not? It was a route of communication with their colonies in East Africa. During the War the Germans used it for transporting supplies to their forces in German East Africa, and the German naval ensign flew on the ships of the German navy there, which consisted of the gunboat *Kingani* and three or four other armed vessels. The British Navy was non-existent there, and as there were no facilities in British hands for shipbuilding, it looked as if the German navy must remain supreme in that locality.

But nothing is impossible to those with imagination and determination. Someone thought of

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sending ships there overland, but the idea seemed too impractical to be gone on with. How could ships be taken so many thousands of miles overland where there was not even a continuous railway or a proper road to go by, let alone any means of conveyance? But imagination won the day and it was decided to send the British Navy there—overland!

Even when decided on, such a task seemed almost too impossible to be taken seriously, and many were to be found ready to scoff at the idea. Behind closed doors at the Admiralty a few officers gathered and worked out every detail. Engineers, storekeeping officers, travellers and anyone with expert knowledge suitable for such an affair were sent for, but not a single person more than was necessary. Although the red brick building of the Admiralty guarded many secrets, for this expedition, secrecy was of the greatest importance, and the idea had to be "railed in" and kept in the hands of the few who at least thought the scheme had a "sporting chance." Luckily, too, there were those ready to undertake the impossible—the old spirit of adventure was still alive, and Lieutenant-Commander A. Spicer-Simson was selected to command the expedition, which consisted of two motor launches and a force of twenty-eight white men. His ships were each of four and a half tons, forty feet in length and with seven feet beam. Their full speed was designed for 15 knots, and their armament one 3-pounder gun and the usual supply of small arms. They were specially

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built in England and christened with the appropriate names of *Mimi* and *Toutou*, and early in 1915 they left Tilbury on their 20,000-mile journey. The voyage to Cape Town was made in an ordinary steamer and no particular difficulties were involved—these lay ahead, when the fleet would have to go overland, through uninhabited and unsurveyed bush.

Time was of importance, so a small, specially-selected advance-guard went out to South Africa a short time ahead of the ships in order to make a rough survey of the land through which the ships would have to proceed. The route lay through the Belgian Congo, and our allies, the Belgian authorities, supplied native labour, which was plentiful, to assist in removing thousands of trees in the jungle, which was so thick as to be almost impossible of penetration except at a snail's speed and in single file. The heat in this part of the world is terrific—worse even than in Benin—but the thickness of the forests at any rate gave the advantage of protection to some extent from the sun.

On arrival at Cape Town the *Mimi* and *Toutou* were unceremoniously hoisted out of the steamer and placed on railway trucks, a difficult job, as the railway gauge in South Africa is very narrow and the tracks very winding, since they pass through the mountains of Cape Colony—so that the vessels had to be very carefully secured to prevent any untoward accident.

The fleet left Cape Town on July 19th for the rail-head at Elizabethville—a journey of some

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2,300 miles—and this part of the journey was easily accomplished, once they had got clear of Cape Town. At Elizabethville, the advance guard was met, and the whole party entrained for the rail-head at Fungurume. Here a camp was made and the serious part of this great adventure started. Things looked a bit different now from when they had been calmly discussed in the little room at the Admiralty. The charts there, had not shown quite how dense the bush was or how steep the gradients that had to be surmounted. One can imagine the discussions that went on, the endless suggestions, and "brain waves" made, the talk of the chances of getting through, and on top of it all, the views of the people with local knowledge who said it was "impossible." When a sailor is told a thing is impossible, he usually springs to life, sucks his teeth, spits on the deck and murmurs "Um!" To him faith in his captain is the first essential; if that is assured he is content to "carry on."

The difficulties ahead were enough to have deterred an ordinary man from going on, and no blame could have been attached to anyone had Simson reported that he found after all, the journey was impossible, but he was not a man to be overcome by difficulties, and he had with him picked men, each with some special knowledge—the chief requirements for the moment being a knowledge of transport, traction engines, forestry, and a doctor with a knowledge of tropical diseases, as so small a force had essentially to be "fit as fiddles" and their number was not sufficient to

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allow of casualties. Spicer-Simson was extremely fortunate in that he had with him Dr. H. M. Hanschell, from the London School of Tropical Medicine, and his other officers included Lieutenant A. E. Wainwright* and Sub-Lieutenant A. Dudley, both of whom had joined up in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve. The greatest requirement of all was the spirit of adventure and the will to win through or die in the attempt. Simson was lucky in this respect and the men were lucky in Simson.

What exactly had to be done? The Navy had to be taken to Sankisia, 150 miles distant through the thickest known—or one might almost say unknown—bush and over a mountain range 6,000 feet above sea-level. There were certain small forest tracks to guide the party and a route had been mapped out by the advance-guard.

Simson decided to make the journey in three 50-mile stages, with a depot between each. Plenty of native carriers were available, thanks to the co-operation of the Belgian authorities, and these were sent on ahead with stores, ammunition, etc., properly made up in loads easy for a native to carry, as a rule, on his head. The details of what was to be in each load and the exact weight of each was a matter of great importance, as not only had everything to be arranged in the order it would be required, but it also had to be remembered that "it is the last straw that breaks the camel's back." A native can carry a given load almost indefinitely,

* With whom at one time the Author had the pleasure of voyaging to South Africa.

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but if the weight is varied up or down it at once becomes a burden to him.

In the meantime the *Mimi* and *Toutou* were mounted in specially constructed cradles and carriages with big wheels ; two traction engines were used to tow them. This sounds rather undignified for ships of His Britannic Majesty's Navy, and had this adventure been publicly known, it would have created a big skit on any music hall stage, especially as, in addition to the traction engines, a number of trek oxen were included in the party, as auxiliary power, and placed under the Naval Discipline Act.

By the middle of August the fleet "set sail" on this unique overland voyage ; they were escorted by armed Askaris as they "steamed" into the bush.

No sooner had the order to sail been given when things started to go wrong. The engines gave trouble, the tow ropes were not the proper length and the track itself was not wide enough or the ground in places level enough. It was as well this should happen at the very start, so as to accustom everyone to what was to follow. One difficulty after another had to be faced and overcome, breakdowns of all sorts naturally occurred, but the biggest jobs of all were making the road suitable for the tractors and also constructing bridges over the numerous dips and ravines. Needless to say, these were nothing in the way of great bridges like the Forth Bridge or Saltash Bridge, and perhaps "bridge" is rather a big

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word to use, as felled trees were chiefly used for the purpose. This work was done mostly by the natives, under, of course, supervision. A sailor invariably loves doing somebody else's job, and as we have seen already, something "out of routine" and they—almost like children—entered into the spirit of the affair, and when not otherwise engaged did a bit of shooting to keep their eye in and incidentally augment their larder, as tinned food soon becomes monotonous and unappetising.

It was as well they had some amusement intermingled with their almost superhuman task. Snakes and scorpions had to be guarded against, especially at night, as the latter are apt to get into one's boots if they get a chance, and their sting is as painful as a snake's. This part of the jungle is also well known for its wild animals, though there was not much danger from these owing to the noise the convoy made on its passage.

Time and again the job seemed hopeless, sometimes no progress was made at all, and at others the progress, in a whole day was barely a mile. Some of the gradients were so steep that the traction engines could not tow. Storms and dust also frequently retarded their progress. When this occurred the two engines and the oxen as well would be brought in combined use to move His Majesty's ships, and when even this combination failed, Simson, not to be defeated, arranged a pulley block haulage, which, although slow, proved successful.

This all sounds very simple. If time had been

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of no importance, and if one had had a cottage to go to each evening it would not have been so bad, but all the time the great heat had to be endured, and furthermore the little party were always working against time, as the rainy season was not far off, and had this arrived the situation would indeed have been hopeless. But although rain was not desired, water was a necessity for the traction engines, and on one occasion when progress had not been sufficient to get to the watering-place, the engines would have stopped, had not a subscription been taken from each man's ration of water, and native men and women commandeered to fetch water from a water hole some distance away. The crew themselves, during their long tramp, were frequently short of water in spite of severe rationing, but notwithstanding this and many other hardships, they fortunately maintained good health and escaped the ravages of the tsetse fly, which carries with it, the germ of sleeping sickness.

Eventually by the end of September the fleet had reached the highest part of the plateau, but their troubles were not at an end, as the descent was almost as difficult as the ascent. Heavy weights going down hills and paths which are winding and tortuous need a lot of looking after to ensure they do not outrun their boiler power, and it would never have done for His Majesty's ships to be wrecked on the side of a hill.

Eventually the long trek was completed and the fleet arrived at Sankisia, another rail-head. Here the two ships were once more put on railway trucks

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and proceeded in "luxury" another fifteen miles to Bukama, where they found themselves more in their own element, as they were soon afloat on the Lualaba. The water is very shallow in this river even for such small vessels, and sandbanks are numerous—but Simson's resource never failed him: casks were fastened to the bottom of the vessels to help protect them and when necessary the *Mimi* and *Toutou* were towed by a flat-bottomed steamer. Steaming and towing they traversed a further four hundred miles till they reached another railhead at Kabalo towards the end of October. In order to lighten the two vessels the stores were put in separate lighters.

Once more the fleet was put on a train for the last lap of their journey to Tanganyika, about five miles from the lake. Simson constructed a short line over the last few miles and also a little harbour called Kalemie, consisting of a small breakwater built of rocks and boulders and some under-water rails, to enable his ships to be launched rapidly. Spicer-Simson received the assistance of the Belgian Commandant who commanded the small battery at Alberville nearby on the shores of the lake—in fact, Kalemie became an almost first-class fortified harbour! In the meantime the ships were kept hidden amongst the trees and bush on the shores of the lake—as it was thought that the Germans might have heard of their approach—though few people would be likely to believe that such a voyage could possibly have been undertaken with success.

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On Christmas Eve, after their five months' voyage by rail, road and sea, the fleet was launched, cleaned up, and the guns and ammunition got ready for action. The engines were also given a trial run to see all was in order. Christmas Day was a well-earned holiday and was celebrated with as much gaiety as the circumstances permitted. No doubt Boxing Day would have been the same as no immediate action was anticipated, and it was thought that probably the fleet would have to go to sea, to seek out the enemy. Imagine everyone's surprise then, when at 9.40 a.m. the German Navy, in the shape of His Imperial Majesty's ship *Kingani*, a monster of 53 tons, was sighted steaming on a course that would take her straight past the harbour. Simson, although anxious to get at her, very wisely and with great restraint let her steam past, so as to be in a position to cut her off from her base.

Although much bigger than Simson's ships, her speed was very slow. Simson waited till she was well past and then ordered his fleet to sea and made the signal to "Chase the Enemy." He quickly overtook the *Kingani* and soon after 11.30 in the forenoon the action commenced. The Germans must have had the shock of their lives when they sighted the British fleet.

Guns were used at a range which was quickly reduced to less than 2,000 yards, and as the range decreased the rifles and quick-firing guns were brought into use as well. The *Mimi*, using lyddite shell, soon started hitting and in a short

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time the *Kingani* which at first had not been able to use her gun, as it would not fire astern, was badly hit. The captain was killed, the gun put out of action, and some of the crew jumped overboard. The action was short and to the point. Fires soon broke out on board and in less than a quarter of an hour the *Kingani* stopped and the engineer who was now in command surrendered the ship, which was brought as near the harbour as possible and beached in a sinking condition. Later she was repaired and added to the British Fleet as H.M.S. *Fifi*—a great asset as she had a 12-pounder gun mounted in her.

Misfortune now overtook one of Simson's ships, as the *Toutou* sank in a heavy storm—though as he had the *Fifi*, this was not so serious as it might have been.

On February 9th, 1916, a second action took place. The German ship *Hedwig von Wiessmann* of about 150 tons and 70 feet long, was sighted early in the morning and chased by the *Mimi* and *Fifi*. The *Mimi*, with her faster speed, got ahead of the *Fifi* and shelled the German ship, but herself kept out of range of the gun mounted in the stern. The German ship was compelled to zigzag and this enabled the *Fifi* to come into action with her heavier gun. The German showed no sign of surrender and the chase, with this running fight, went on for over three hours, during which time the German received many hits.

Eventually the *Mimi* closed to 4,000 yards and with the *Fifi* a little farther off, the two put shot

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after shot into the German, hitting her in the engine-room and setting the ship on fire. The Germans fought gallantly on till their ship sank by the bows, with her colours still flying. Twenty of the crew were taken prisoners.

There now remained only two German ships on this inland sea ; one was a small, fast motor-boat, which was sighted one day by Spicer-Simson's fleet, and the commander at once ran her aground and set fire to her ; the other was the *Graf von Gotzen*, a large ship of 850 tons. Although she carried more guns than either of the other ships which had fought, her captain decided not to face an action and to sink her. He therefore had her filled with cement and then opened the seacocks to sink her and prevent her falling into the hands of the British or being of any use.

Simson's work was done, the impossible had been achieved, the sea was clear of the enemy, and another page of adventure and endurance, combined with two successful naval actions, had been added to our history.

CHAPTER XVII

" BIG STEAMERS "

" CARMANIA "

1914

As has already been mentioned, liners are frequently fitted with defensive guns, and fight actions like those of the *Windsor Castle*, the *Palm Branch* and the *Manchester Trader*; but others are sometimes fitted out in war time for offensive operations—these are known as armed liners.

During the Great War, two of these great ships met in a fight to the death. The British liner *Carmania* of 19,000 tons of the Cunard line, under the command of Captain Noel Grant, was fitted out at Liverpool in the early days of the War and carried eight 4·7-inch guns. Although Captain Noel Grant of the Royal Navy had been placed in command, the peace time commander of the ship, Captain J. C. Barr, was given the rank of Commander R.N.R., and remained on board as Captain Grant's navigator and adviser. Some of the other officers and men of the ship who were required, owing to their special knowledge, were also given naval rank, and remained amongst the crew.

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In addition to the guns referred to, the ship was equipped with rifles, searchlights, and such other minor accessories as could easily be provided, but even then, though capable of useful work in patrolling or stopping and searching ships carrying contraband, she was unarmoured and was no match for an ordinary cruiser.

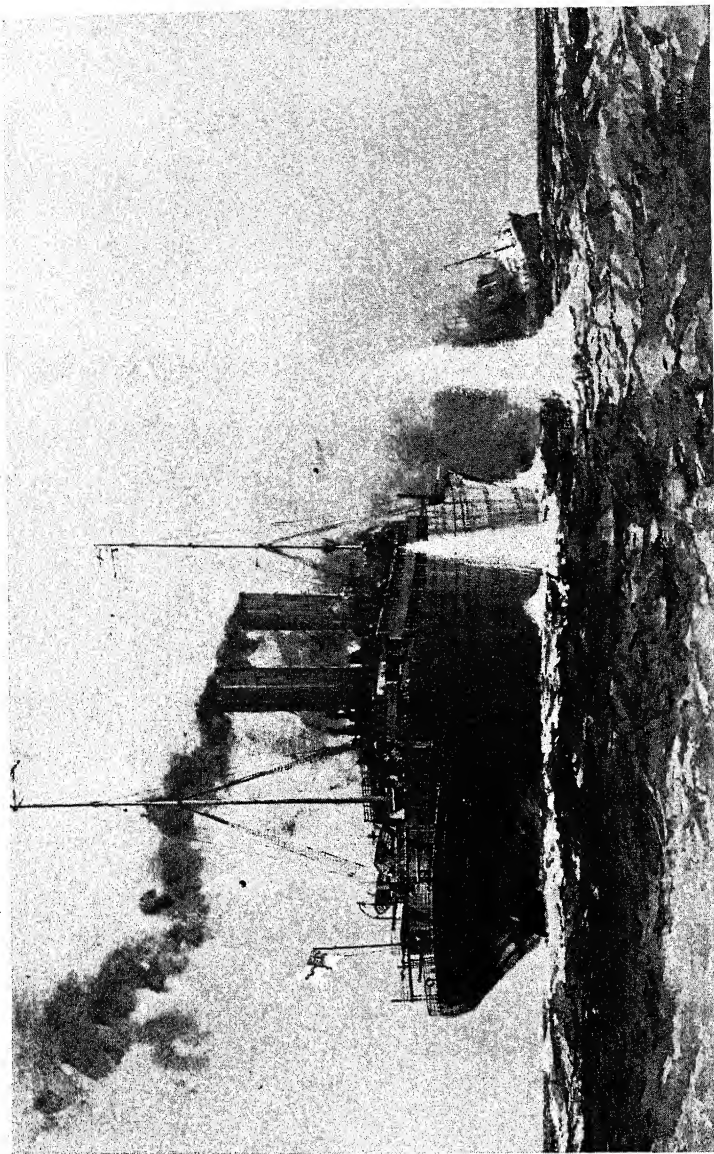
After the outbreak of war, she was first employed in Home waters and then sent to reinforce the squadron of Admiral Cradock, who, as is described in another chapter, gallantly fought a German squadron off Coronel.*

In South American waters a German liner was also operating, having run out from one of the South American ports. She was the *Cap Trafalgar*, of 18,500 tons, a new ship, and the fastest of the Hamburg-South America Line; on the outbreak of war she had been secretly armed, probably with smaller guns than the *Carmania*, but she had a greater speed—18 knots against the *Carmania's* 17.

The chances of these two ships meeting each other in the wide expanse of the Atlantic was very remote, and even if they did, on sighting smoke, each would have to make sure she was not up against a big cruiser, both British and German armoured cruisers being somewhere in the vicinity.

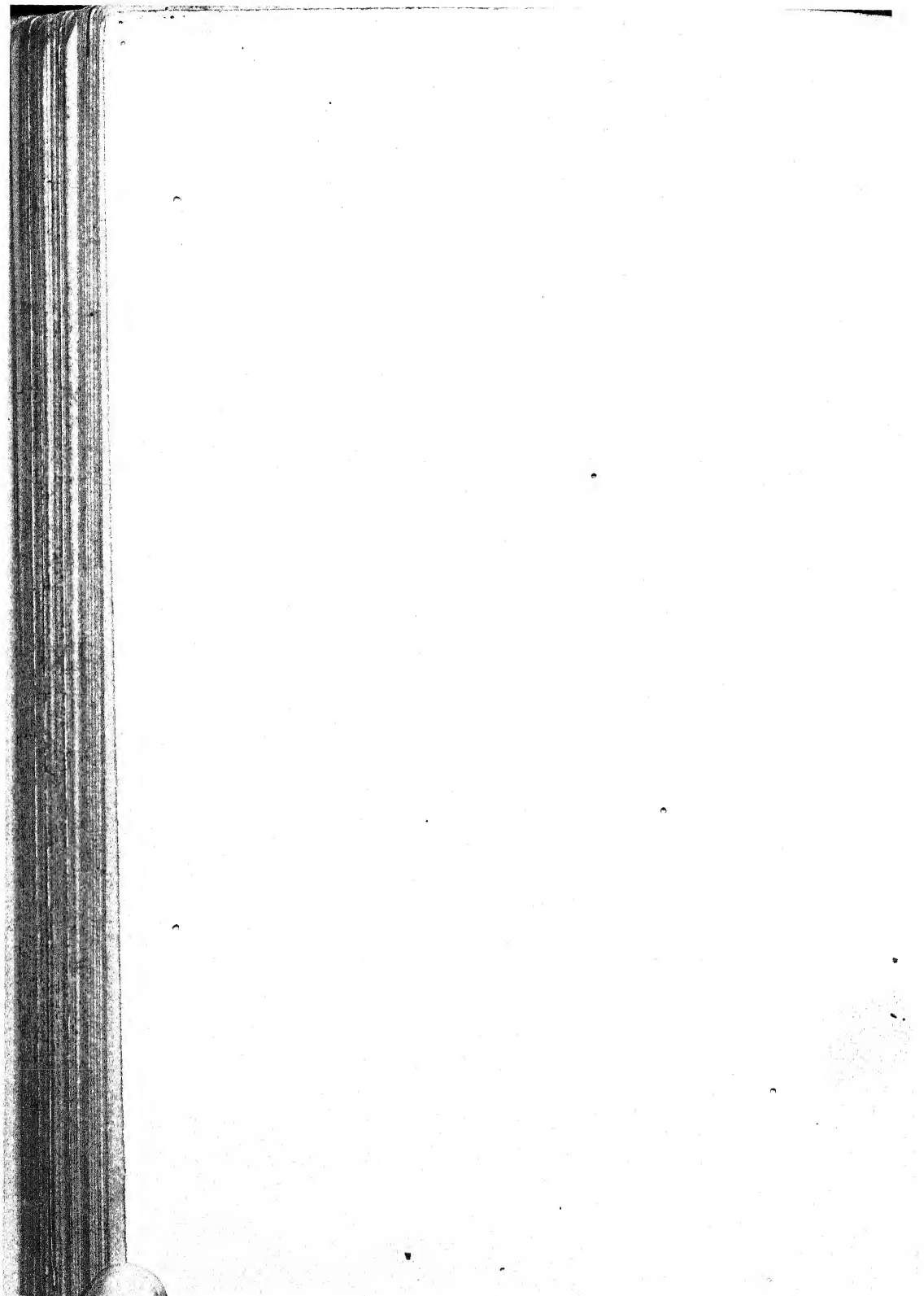
Early in September, Grant was on his way to have a look at the small island of Trinidad, which it was thought, might be used by the German ships for coaling purposes, as it is well out of the ordinary

* Chapter V, part II.



By kind permission of the Cunard Steamship Co.

" CARMANIA " IN ACTION



Big Steamers—"Carmania," 1914

route of merchant ships, though sailing ships, occasionally used to call there. Moreover the island was not fitted with any wireless or telegraphic communication. There is a fairly good anchorage there, and the lee formed by the island would enable ships to coal in comparative safety and secrecy. Early on the morning of September 14th, as the *Carmania* was approaching the island, she sighted a big ship, which at first could not be distinguished beyond the fact that she had two masts and two funnels. As a matter of fact it was not until some time afterwards that the ship was identified as the *Cap Trafalgar*, for this liner had been built with three funnels, of which one, as is often the case, was simply used for ventilation purposes and, on the outbreak of war, this funnel had been removed to alter the vessel's appearance.*

All that Grant knew was that there was some ship off the island, and as he could reasonably suppose that it was a German one, he at once gave chase, though he knew that by doing so he was taking a great risk, as, even if the ship he saw was a liner, there might well be German cruisers in the vicinity. In the meantime, as he approached, he noticed that the big ship was coaling from colliers. Grant soon realised that he too had been sighted, as he saw a great deal of smoke suddenly rising from the enemy vessel, as the stokers below added coal to the furnaces.

The *Carmania* was at once made ready for

* See *Emden*, Chapter VIII.

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action, and as it was about seven bells (11.30 in the forenoon), the crew were ordered to get their dinners. It is customary in the Navy to have a midday meal at 11.30 or noon, and it is a bad thing to start a fight on an empty stomach; so this order of Grant's was a very wise one, though one can hardly imagine that the crew, full of excitement and anxious to look through the port-holes, could exactly face sitting down to a square meal. A quick snack whilst cracking a joke or two was more suited to the occasion.

The *Cap Trafalgar* at first began to make off, leaving the colliers to look after themselves. Before she had gone very far she turned round and began to close towards the *Carmania*. Both ships were now flying their colours, but as the enemy vessel had not been identified yet, it was uncertain whether she was armed or not. The two ships were quickly converging on each other and by noon were about 8,000 yards apart, when the *Carmania* fired a shot across the stranger's bows. The *Cap Trafalgar* at once replied with two shots straight at the *Carmania*'s bridge which did a lot of damage. There was no doubt now about the *Cap Trafalgar* (still unknown by name) being an armed liner similar to the *Carmania* herself, and Grant saw that he was about to take part in this somewhat unique action between two big liners of more or less equal size and speed.

The ships rapidly closed, both captains now being keen on fighting to a finish—one or the other, or even perhaps both would have to perish. One

Big Steamers—"Carmania," 1914

can easily imagine the feelings of those on board the two ships, whether English or German. Even many of the naval officers and men had never been in action before, but at least they had spent their careers in being trained to fight and had been brought up under naval discipline. What must have been the feelings of the many officers and men, including cooks and stewards, who had joined their ships for ordinary peaceful voyages and were now about to take part in a battle such as they had never even dreamt of? But, as will be shown, the crews on both sides fought with great calmness and gallantry, and one might almost think they had entered the service of their respective companies for no other purpose than to fight.*

Grant's fire, was not so rapid as the *Cap Trafalgar's* to commence with, but the shooting was hot and strong on both sides, though it appeared that the *Carmania's* fire control arrangements were superior to those of the *Cap Trafalgar*. The ships soon closed to within about 5,000 yards of each other when they were able to use their machine-guns as well as their main armaments. The ships, being high out of the water, were good targets and the funnels and ventilators on both sides received much damage. Soon after the action commenced a shell exploded on the bridge of the *Carmania*; this upset the control arrangements from the bridge and also placed Grant and those on the bridge with him in great danger, but

* It must not be forgotten that Kitchener's Army were also nearly all civilians.

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he continued firing and both sides were at it as hard as they could go till they were less than 4,000 yards apart, with the *Cap Trafalgar* steering across the *Carmania's* bows.

It was obvious that both sides were receiving much damage as the shells burst all over the two vessels. Flames and smoke were pouring out from many parts of both ships and it was hard as yet to discern which one had received the most damage, and there was still time for either side to win. Neither ship had much protection for her magazines, and if either was lucky enough to place a shell in the other fellow's magazine the game would be up. Now and then the smoke would clear sufficiently to see what damage had been done, and Grant could see that the *Cap Trafalgar* had been hit on the water-line in many places and, by the steam that was hissing out of her with a deafening noise heard above the gunfire it was assumed that her steam pipes had been cut. Fires were also raging in many parts of the ship.

The *Carmania* was not much better off as she, too, was on fire and her water-pipes had been cut, but the greatest damage was to the bridge itself, on which the Germans had quite rightly concentrated; many a ship has been thrown into confusion by the captain being killed, and it must be remembered, too, that in these modern ships the steering-wheel and the communication to the engine-room and other parts of the ship are all on the bridge. So the German tactics were very sound. Grant was literally getting his eyebrows

Big Steamers—"Carmania," 1914

scorched as he continued to fight his ship. It was lucky for Grant that the wind was astern, as otherwise the fire on board would have been uncontrollable, as when a ship is on fire it is generally best to have the wind astern as it does not create such a draught as when steaming in to the wind. But the end was not yet, though gradually the two ships had opened their distance somewhat. Both ships now must have appeared to be doomed. The *Cap Trafalgar* had already begun to take a heavy list, the water was gaining, and the fire was spreading through her decks; the captain, too, had been killed. The *Carmania* also was making water and was in great danger of being burnt; in addition to this her forebridge had by now been destroyed and many of her crew were lying killed or wounded about the decks.

Neither side would give in and the crews continued to load and fire their guns with the hope of getting in a knock-out blow, but the fight was developing into a chase as the *Cap Trafalgar* was apparently trying to make for shore as the *Emden* did when engaged by the *Sydney*. Having the better speed she soon got out of range and by 1.30 p.m. neither side was firing any longer and it looked as if the *Cap Trafalgar* was nearing her end, as her list was increasing every minute. Shortly afterwards the *Cap Trafalgar* slowly heeled over and eventually turned turtle and disappeared with the whole of her crew. The officer in command of the *Cap Trafalgar* had refused to strike his colours, and as the ship went down

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the German ensign was still flying at the mast-head.

The *Carmania* was still in great danger herself, and it was only by the tremendous exertion of Grant and his crew that she avoided a similar fate. The fire main of the *Carmania* had been put out of action, and for some time the crew had been obliged to fight the fire with only hand buckets filled with water from the various taps a liner always has; but eventually it was got under, though only in the nick of time, as shortly after the *Cap Trafalgar* had sunk, smoke was again sighted by the *Carmania*.

Grant realised that with the condition his ship was in and with 9 of his crew killed and nearly 30 wounded, he was not quite ready for another fight just yet; so steering by the sun and wind, his navigating bridge being completely shattered, he made off as fast as possible to get in touch with one of our cruisers.

Eventually he met two British cruisers, the *Bristol* and the *Cornwall*, and with their aid patched up the *Carmania's* wounds.

Thus ended an action which was unequalled during the whole course of the War.

Both Captain Grant and Captain Barr were made Companions of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath and well they deserved it.

The *Carmania*, with this high reputation which she had formed for herself, continued to serve in various capacities during the remainder of the War. After the War she returned to the service

Big Steamers—"Carmania," 1914

of the Cunard line and received the unique honour of a presentation "plate" which had belonged to Lord Nelson. The presentation was made by the Navy League, who, in making it, stated that they realised that while every unit of the Fleet had rendered service in accordance with the best traditions of the Royal Navy, H.M.S. *Carmania* had been able to render herself conspicuous amongst her gallant comrades.

CHAPTER XVIII

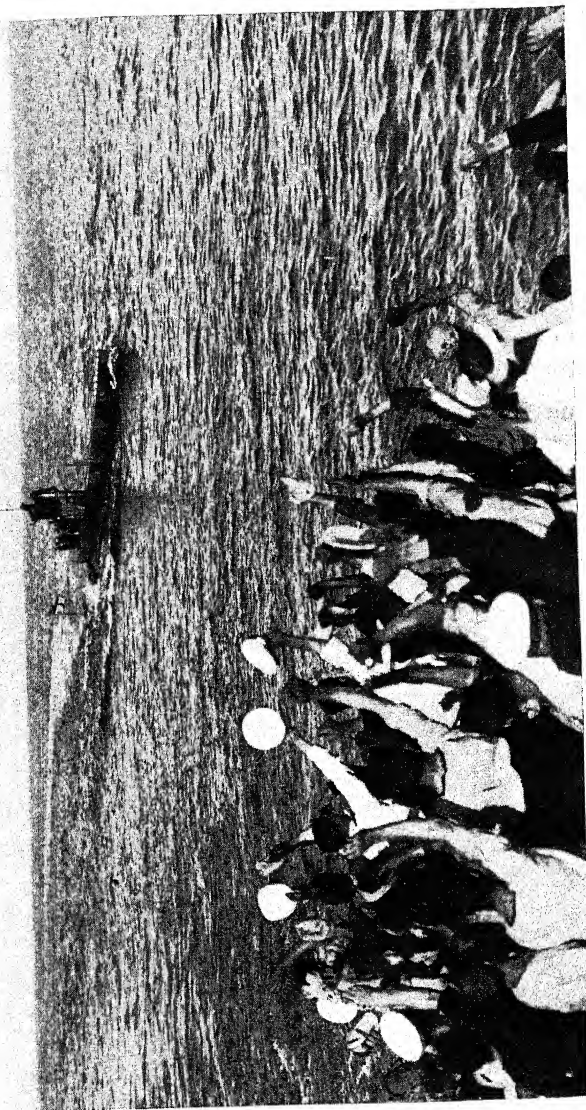
ONE DARK NIGHT

E II

1915

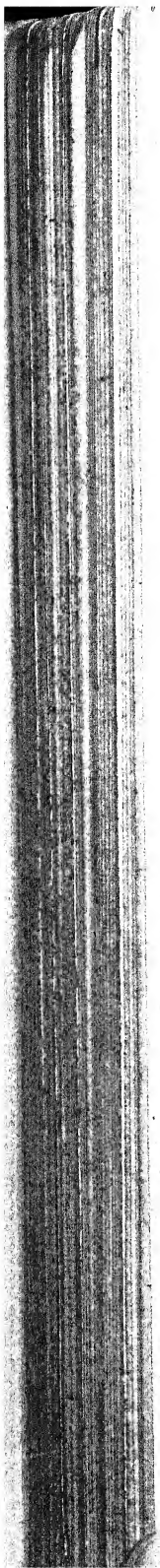
A VOLUME could be filled with strange stories of the adventures of ships, under water, during the Great War.

Though for over a hundred years experiments had been made with under-water craft, few people foresaw what they would be able to do, and previous to 1914, the submarine was looked upon as a vessel of limited value. The most that people expected of it, was that it might under favourable conditions attack men-of-war in home waters, and then only in suitable weather and only a few miles from its base. Neither Britain nor Germany had many submarines at the outbreak of war, and what they had, were comparatively small and of a very limited radius of action. If war serves no other purpose, it serves to induce men to use their utmost power of ingenuity, and still more it produces men with courage which in many cases, but for war, would lie dormant. Before the War had progressed very far, both nations were building submarines which could



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E 11 BEING CHEERED ON RETURN FROM HER EXPLOITS



One Dark Night—E 11, 1915

carry not only torpedoes but also guns and mines—in fact, some submarines were built which carried 12-inch guns, which were bigger than even cruisers carried.

Far from confining their activities to home waters, the submarines in the Great War went far afield, to what appeared to be incredible distances, and past insuperable difficulties. The German submarines went from Germany to New York and back, south about to the Canaries, north about round Scotland, out to the Mediterranean and the Turkish coast—no one knew when or where a submarine would suddenly appear next. Our submarine officers did not require to go quite such long distances, but the voyages they had to take were of the most hazardous and death-inviting nature. With the old spirit of adventure in them, they entered two “impossible” seas—the Baltic and the Sea of Marmora. A glance at a map will show at once that entrance into these seas was of a most hazardous nature. The story to be related here took place in the latter, and of the many strange experiences and deeds of great bravery which fell to the lot of our submarine officers, it would be hard to equal the strange experience of Lieutenant D'Oyly Hughes.

Turkey had been on friendly terms with this country till the outbreak of war ; in fact, a British Admiral was stationed at Constantinople to train the Turkish Navy. At the outbreak of war two German cruisers, the *Goeben* and *Breslau*, had taken refuge at Constantinople and eventually the

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Turks were persuaded to side with the Germans. This was a most unfortunate turn of events for the Allies, as Turkey held the key to the Sea of Marmora, and Constantinople was the centre of German influence in the Near East. Ships alone at first, and then ships reinforced by soldiers and airmen attempted to force a way to Constantinople—the great operation which is known as the Dardanelles Campaign, or more popularly “Galipoli.”

The advance towards Constantinople did not fulfil expectations, but if nobody else could get to the Sea of Marmora, the submarine commanders reckoned they could, and they demonstrated their ability before any serious land operations had commenced. Like so many other naval adventures, the attempt to do such a thing seemed too impossible to contemplate seriously. The chart will show, that the approach to Constantinople means going through a narrow and tortuous channel, down which a very strong current runs. The Turks had been able to make the channel almost impregnable. There were strong fortifications on either side, supplemented by searchlights to help them in night work. As a particular precaution against submarines, the Turks had laid several rows of mines and many entanglements in the way of nets. The submarine commanders, whose very training makes them callous of all danger, kept worrying the Commander-in-Chief to let them make the attempt, as they reckoned that with suitable fittings on the bows of their

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submarines they would be able to get through the obstacles ; and the honour of being the first commander to do so, fell on Lieutenant Norman Holbrook, who received the Victoria Cross for successfully getting through the obstacles and torpedoing a Turkish battleship.

After Holbrook's first attempt and success it became almost a "very ordinary" occurrence for submarines to go even farther than Holbrook, who, owing to the small size of his vessel, had been limited in his activities. In fact, whereas Holbrook had to go straight through the Straits and back, the later and bigger vessels used to go into the Sea of Marmora and spend several weeks there, becoming a menace to everything that would float on the seas or lying even alongside the wharves of Constantinople.

D'Oyly Hughes was the First Lieutenant of submarine E 11, commanded by Captain N. E. Dunbar Nasmith,* one of the many submarine commanders who made a perfect habit of going through the Dardanelles and, like many another, had to steal, with great skill and facing much danger, through the mines and nets, under the guns of forts and past many hidden perils into the Black Sea.

Nasmith had made many such trips and did no end of damage, sinking ships of all sorts and even going into Constantinople harbour itself. One would have thought he would be satisfied, but not so—he decided to destroy a railway viaduct on

* Now Vice-Admiral Dunbar Nasmith, V.C., C.B.

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the Ismid Bagdad Railway. The natural way was to destroy it by gunfire. This he tried to do, but without success, and for once Nasmith appeared to be foiled; but D'Oyly Hughes came to his rescue and volunteered to do the job single-handed.

His requirements in the way of equipment were simple—all he asked for was a small raft, a tin of guncotton and fuse, torch, whistle, revolver—and a bayonet for luck! The greatest asset was the one which he himself supplied: a calm and calculated determination and courage.

Nasmith arranged for all his ordinary requirements, and about 2 a.m. on the morning of August 21st, 1915, he took his submarine quietly into the Gulf of Ismid. It was necessary to creep in quietly, as it was known that the Turkish sentries would be on patrol along the shore. At the same time, having no lights to guide him, Nasmith had to be careful not to run his vessel aground at an inopportune moment or place.

Whilst D'Oyly Hughes was putting the last touches to his outfit and seeing that nothing was adrift, Nasmith had taken E 11 "right in" till he just touched the ground as close to the viaduct as he could get. His work was done for the time, and the success or otherwise of this adventure fell on the shoulders of D'Oyly Hughes.

The raft was launched and D'Oyly Hughes quietly slipped on to it with his clothes and equipment. As he shoved off into the darkness one can imagine the crew of the submarine having the

One Dark Night—E 11, 1915

greatest difficulty in refraining from giving a cheer.

D'Oyly Hughes made for what he thought would be a good landing-place, but it was pitch-dark and he could only make a guess. He must have felt like one of the old pioneers setting out to find a new world, and beating in his heart must have been something of the spirit of all our great sea heroes combined. Anyhow, the adventure had started and he had nothing to help him except his own resource and courage. He required it all at his first landing, as he met with his first reverse when he found that the cliffs were too steep to offer any chance of success. Used to making rapid decisions, from his experience in submarines, he at once re-embarked on his little raft and paddled on to a more hopeful-looking spot.

We may well wonder how D'Oyly Hughes felt, while looking (in the dark) for a "suitable spot." From the submarine the cliffs had not looked so steep as he now found them to be, and it seemed at first as if there was no way out of the difficulty. D'Oyly Hughes had no chart with him and nothing to guide him except his own resource. He did not intend to give in without having a run for his money, and he decided to look around for a more suitable place where the cliffs were not so steep.

Eventually he came to a better-looking place, though whatever spot he selected he knew it would not be a case of walking across a nice sandy beach. He was not surprised therefore when he

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found that his first task was to scramble up the cliffs, no easy job on a dark night and with a pretty heavy load to carry, but nothing could stop him, now he was well started.

When he got to the top he wisely decided to have a breather before going on. Then, feeling refreshed, he set about to find the railway line—a far more difficult and dangerous job than climbing cliffs, as he had to walk very slowly, cautiously and as quietly as possible, for each step must be taking him closer to the enemy sentries, and the last thing in the world he wanted to do was to disturb them, as he would stand a poor chance of success if he were discovered. However, after carefully groping his way through the darkness, he stumbled on the railway line. What a moment of relief—but not long lasting! Even more cautiously he had to proceed practically on tiptoe towards the viaduct; slowly creeping along, he suddenly heard sounds and stopped himself with a jerk. Peering through the darkness, he was just able to make out what he took to be the forms of three men.

This would have been enough to send any man's heart into his mouth, but D'Oyly Hughes had no time to waste, and satisfying himself that they were real live men, he at once decided to leave his equipment on the ground and make a tour of investigation. He had not got very far when the cackling of chickens disturbed the stillness of the night in a most unwelcome fashion, and informed him that he had stumbled into a farmyard. His

One Dark Night—E 11, 1915

first thought must have been not so much about the chickens as of the farmers whom the noise would awaken, and once more he had to stand still and listen ; luckily it was only the chickens he had disturbed and not the farmers.

Having satisfied himself on this point, Hughes continued his investigation—always on the qui vive for more rude shocks. Eventually he reached the viaduct, but disappointment and a further shock again awaited him, for, before he actually got to it, he espied a camp-fire and sitting round it he saw a party of men, also a broken-down engine, which obviously the men were attending to at their leisure. This was no good for Hughes's purpose, as it was hopeless for him to advance, and wrecked the main chance of his enterprise ; but even this little setback was not going to deprive him of doing some damage to the railway—he had no intention of disappointing his captain or letting the enemy imagine their railway lines were invulnerable, but he decided he must be content with blowing up a bit of the line at some other place.

He therefore crept quietly back to his equipment, taking great care not to disturb the chickens again. He then looked round for a good place to make the most use of his guncotton. After a bit of a search, he was lucky in finding a small culvert, where more harm could be done than on the ordinary flat line, but unfortunately it was very close to the three talking men.

Hughes was by now thoroughly used to risks

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and one more or less didn't make much odds, and he decided that as no time was to be lost, he must get on with the explosion without delay. He quickly placed the guncotton charge in position—this was comparatively simple compared with the risk to be run when he fired the pistol of the fuse. However quietly he tried to do this, it was bound to make a certain amount of noise and arouse the men. The chance had to be taken and so, with a one, two, three, he fired.

The Turks were roused from their revelries in alarm, and rushing around, soon spied D'Oyly Hughes as he bore down the line as fast as his legs could carry him. D'Oyly Hughes saw the Turks coming after him, and turning round he fired his revolver as they came on; they replied with their rifles, which was rather to Hughes's advantage as it delayed their advance, and although it is very unpleasant to have men shooting at you from behind, D'Oyly Hughes trusted to the darkness and the Turks' bad shooting to save him from injury. In this he was lucky, as he escaped unscratched.

Hughes's legs carried him faster than the Turks' did theirs and he soon had a good lead, and after running about a mile, he made a dash for the beach. As he did so he heard with great relief the sound of the explosion, which told him his bomb had been well and truly laid and his task well and successfully done.

ERI had been waiting with great anxiety, and when those on board, also heard the explosion, they

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knew D'Oyly Hughes had succeeded. Bits of wreckage actually fell into the water close to E 11—so there was no mistake as to what had taken place. Nasmith at once made ready to retrieve his First Lieutenant and closed the shore again.

D'Oyly Hughes's difficulties and dangers, though, were not over yet. He had got safely down to the beach and had plunged straight into the water as quickly as he could. He started to swim out towards where he hoped E 11 was—and as pre-arranged he blew his whistle. His heart must have leapt into his mouth once more when he got no reply. As bad luck would have it, E 11 was round the corner and could not hear. The anxiety of Nasmith and his crew all straining their ears for the whistle must have been almost as great as was that of D'Oyly Hughes when he received no answer.

Hughes's night had been one of quick decisions, and another had now to be made. Daylight was at hand, bringing danger to him and to E 11. His clothes were getting heavy and he realised he would soon become exhausted, so he swam ashore again and had a brief rest and then, discarding his remaining equipment except his whistle, he moved along the shore and blew it again. As he took to the water once more, he heard rifle shots from the cliffs and he thought his last chance had gone, but luckily for him E 11 had heard his whistle this time and was coming for him.

Unfortunately, in the early mist the silhouette of the submarine made her look (a common

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occurrence) like three boats, and Hughes must have almost lost heart, but not his head. He swam towards the shore once more, but on looking back he realised his mistake, and with shouts for help mingled with relief, he swam out once more, now nearly exhausted, and arrived on board to report "First Lieutenant returned on board." E 11 was then able to dive and proceed in execution of previous orders.

CHAPTER XIX

ANOTHER MOLE : ZEEBRUGGE

1918

" St. George for England "

BRUGES, was an inland base, from which German submarines sailed, via the canals which gave exits to the sea, at Zeebrugge and Ostend. Vice-Admiral Roger Keyes* was ordered to block these two exits—an idea which had been evolved by Admiral Sir Lewis Bayly, K.C.B., when he was second-in-command of the Grand Fleet in 1914, at the time his flag was flying in H.M.S. *Marlborough*.

It was considered that the one at Zeebrugge would be the more difficult, as the entrance to the canal was inside a harbour surrounded by a mole, and any ships, even if successful in entering the harbour, would probably be destroyed by the guns on the long arm of the mole before they

* Now Admiral-of-the-Fleet Sir Roger John Brownlow Keyes, G.C.B., K.C.V.O., C.M.G., D.S.O., LL.D., D.C.L.(Oxon), Honorary Colonel Commandant of the Portsmouth Division of the Royal Marines. His service included the Vitu Expedition (1890), China (1900), on both of which occasions he was awarded medals. He also served with distinction as Naval Attaché in Rome, Vienna, Athens and Constantinople. His foreign decorations include the Grand Cross of the Order of Leopold (Belgium), Grand Officier Legion d'Honneur, Commander of St. Maurice and St. Lazarus, Croix de Guerre (French and Belgian), and the American Distinguished Service Medal.

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could block the entrance. Therefore the moles must be taken first.

Keyes's squadron consisted of his own flagship, the destroyer *Warwick*, three old cruisers to be used as block-ships, three storming vessels for the Mole, two submarines with a picket boat, ten destroyers, thirty-one motor-launches, sixteen coastal motor-boats and some aircraft. In addition to this he had an off-shore force of cruisers, destroyers and monitors.

When one compares this large force with what Nelson had in his day, the job would seem a simple one. But not so. In the first place, Zeebrugge was strongly defended by large modern guns of great range, and ships approaching by day could be spotted by aircraft, while ships approaching by night would be picked out by searchlights. Anything in the way of a day attack was out of the question—but what about a night attack? A foggy night might offer an opportunity, but then one might have to wait a long time for it, and on a foggy night the increased difficulties of navigation would make the entrance to the harbour less easy to find. What about a temporary fog, to cover the approach and then to have it lifted when a dash for the harbour could be made? Science had so far developed as to make this possible, and Wing Commander Frank Brock, already well known in the country for his knowledge of fireworks, was the man for the job. Not only was artificial fog required but also artificial light, and Brock had expert knowledge of both.

Another Mole—Zeebrugge, 1918

He wholeheartedly gave his services to a job which eventually cost him his life, much to the regret of all who had worked with him.

The next consideration was how actually to block the entrance to the canal. By ships that could steam there, and then sink themselves seemed a practical way as far as it went. But as a ship will not always sink in the way it is wanted to, and often takes a long time to go under, it was decided that ships filled with cement would be the ideal arrangement, and this would have the advantage of making salvage more difficult. Three old cruisers were selected for the purpose, *Thetis*, *Intrepid* and *Iphigenia*, and duly fitted.

What about the crews that took them in—how would they get back again after sinking their ships? Of course they were all willing to give their lives, but was it necessary? The motor-launches commanded and manned by officers and men of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve would be just the craft to steam in with the block-ships and save the crews.*

To get to the entrance of the canal meant passing the Mole, and here came the greatest problem. The Mole was about a mile in length and built of solid concrete—on it were powerful batteries of guns and every other form of defence, so that even if the block-ships got as far as the Mole without being seen, they would be sunk by the powerful guns on it before they got to the

* Since Zeebrugge, science has made further strides and ships can now be controlled and steered by wireless without any men being actually on board.

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canal entrance. The obvious thing was to attack the Mole and engage the batteries whilst the block-ships were doing their job. This would indeed be a stiff task to take on.

It was decided that the most dangerous parts of the scheme should be taken by volunteers. But secrecy was one of the most important parts of the undertaking and when volunteers were called for from the Grand Fleet and elsewhere, they could not be told the exact nature of the enterprise, but as soon as it was known that a dangerous job was "in the air," so numerous were those who volunteered that they soon exceeded the requirements.

Another old cruiser, H.M.S. *Vindictive*, was selected to do the job, together with two Liverpool ferry steamers, the *Iris* and *Daffodil*. These two vessels were selected out of the many inspected because of the numerous advantages they had, such as a good deck space for accommodating a large number of men. They were easy to handle and could be used as tugs if required. Their chief disadvantage was their engine and boiler capacity, as they had not been built even for such a comparatively short voyage as that between Dover and Zeebrugge. On board these three ships were placed the parties of bluejackets and marines to storm the Mole after the ships had arrived alongside. They were under the orders of Captain A. F. B. Carpenter, who was on board the *Vindictive*.

If all went well and the storming parties got on the Mole, what was to prevent them being

Another Mole—Zeebrugge, 1918

overwhelmed by the German troops there or by large reinforcements sent from the garrison? As it happened, at the inshore end of the Mole was a viaduct, which allowed the water to ebb and flow under it. If this could be removed, no reinforcements could arrive. Now Keyes knew as much about submarines as anyone in the Navy—and it was conceived that if block-ships, motor-launches and destroyers could get into the harbour, why not submarines? It was arranged therefore that two submarines should be included in this operation. They would be filled with explosives, steam under the viaduct, then blow themselves and the viaduct up, whilst the crews got away in the boats.

Keyes had to think out a thousand and one other details and to order everything to be arranged to the "tick," if this great adventure was to be a success. He was able to leave nearly all the arrangements for the storming of the Mole entirely in the hands of Carpenter, who, amongst his many other great qualities, possessed that of being one of the best known and skilful navigators in the Navy. Enough has been said to show that the success of the operation depended on each part coinciding with the others, as it will be readily understood, that any premature action of any section of the enterprise would at once give the Germans the alarm.

Even after all the preparations had been made, and when each officer and every man had been trained to do exactly his particular job, yet the matters of secrecy, wind and weather were the

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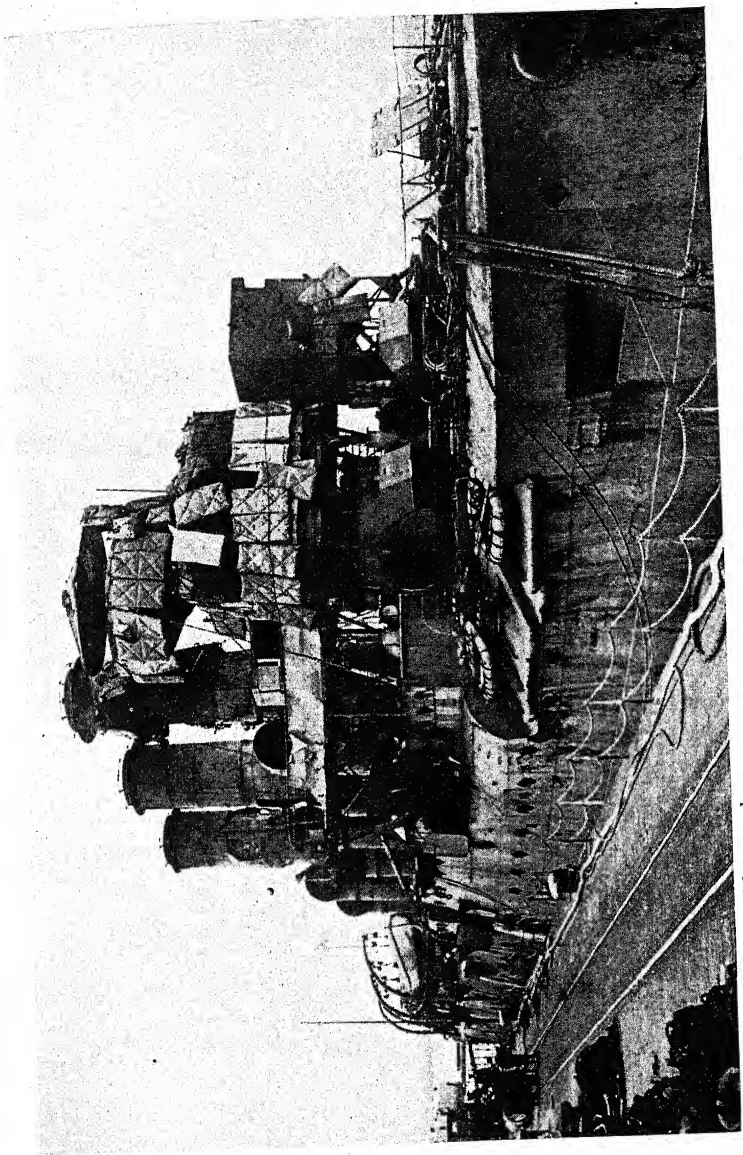
deciding factors as to the exact date on which Keyes could make the attack.

Twice he sallied forth to find the conditions did not suit him and was obliged to turn back. A less resolute man might have gone on and failed, but Keyes was a man who was going to make sure of success. The officers and men under him who had volunteered for the job were naturally disappointed when on these two occasions he had to turn back, but as he understood that their disappointment would be as great as his, and they knew how he felt about it, too, the spirit behind the operation remained unbroken.

On April 22nd, 1918, Keyes again gave the order to proceed—his forces came from the Thames, Dunkirk and Dover, and each knew its allotted place. Commodore Tyrwhitt* with his famous Harwich force was also in position to render support if required, and farther north still, was Beatty with the Grand Fleet ever on the alert. Keyes himself left Dover flying his flag in the destroyer *Warwick*, whilst Carpenter in the *Vindictive*, with the *Iris* and *Daffodil* in tow, came down from the north followed by the block-ships. Although Keyes was in command he had arranged for the *Vindictive* actually to lead the blocking force and also to be the pivot on which the individual ships formed and turned.

As this armada of over seventy vessels, comprising as much variety in their appearance, size

* Now Admiral Sir Reginald Yorke Tyrwhitt, Bt., G.C.B., D.S.O. D.C.L.(Oxon).



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"VINDICTIVE" AFTER ACTION

Another Mole—Zeebrugge, 1918

and duties as can ever have fallen to the lot of a Commander-in-Chief (officially called Vice-Admiral Commanding), was crossing the Channel in broad daylight, each man had many thoughts passing through his head; in the first place the whole affair seemed a direct challenge to death; then there was a possibility of enemy aircraft seeing them and giving the show away; and last, but by no means least, were they again to be ordered back owing to unfavourable circumstances of wind and weather? If all went well and they went on, they would be on the Mole and the canal would be blocked in the early hours of April 23rd. Keyes knew what was in everyone's mind, and when just before dark he made the signal "St. George for England," he wished just to tell his men all there was to be told.

Carpenter now had to go ahead, and on him would chiefly rest the responsibility for success or failure, since everyone looked to the *Vindictive* as the time-keeping ship on which the storming of the Mole, the blocking of the canal, and the blowing up of the viaduct depended.

Whilst Carpenter was approaching the Belgian coast, bombardments had been taking place on Zeebrugge from the air and from the monitors, so as to mislead the enemy as to Keyes's real intentions. The cruisers and destroyers from Harwich were ready to swoop down if any enemy destroyers, some of which were known to be at Zeebrugge, should attempt to escape northward back to Kiel.

Sailormen All

Carpenter had arranged to lay the *Vindictive* alongside the Mole at midnight, and in accordance with plans, the motor-launches and coastal motor-boats went ahead at specified times to lay the smoke screens which would hide the *Vindictive* and the block-ships as they approached. Well did these small craft do their job, for they laid such a screen of artificial fog that Carpenter could hardly see the end of his own ship, let alone anything else. Unfortunately the wind did not remain favourable and blew the fog in the wrong direction, but that was a mere detail—Carpenter was ready for all emergencies and intended to be punctual whatever happened.

At midnight the *Vindictive* emerged from the smoke and Carpenter saw the Mole a few hundred yards ahead : he had hit it off almost to a yard. He at once ordered full speed ahead in order to place his ship alongside, at the same time opening fire at point-blank range with all his guns.

The Germans, who had not taken any particular notice of the bombardments (so used were they to them), nor even of the two little coastal motor-boats, commanded by C. R. L. Outhwaite and L. R. Blake, both young sub-lieutenants, which had gallantly entered the harbour and fired torpedoes, now awoke to the fact that their impregnable fortress was being attacked. As soon as the alarm was given the most terrific din commenced in all directions, the batteries blazed off their guns with intense fury at the *Vindictive*, and shell after shell burst on board her, but Carpenter's job was to

Another Mole—Zeebrugge, 1918

put his ship alongside, and he put her there, at one minute past midnight. The big guns, howitzers and pom-poms of the *Vindictive* were firing for all they were worth to clear the Mole and damage the guns on it. Every known weapon was taking part in the fight, and one can imagine the intensity of the fire on both sides.

The *Vindictive* was delayed a few minutes in getting properly alongside, as the *Daffodil*, which, according to the pre-arranged plan, was to help her by acting as a tug and pushing her alongside, was a bit astern owing to the "fog" having held her up.

In the meantime Carpenter ordered his anchors to be let go to keep the ship close in. The firing became more and more intense every minute. The men on board the *Vindictive*, waiting calmly to board the Mole, were being hewn down—the leaders of the bluejackets and marines, Captain Halahan and Lieutenant-Colonel Elliott, were both killed and with them many other officers and men.

About three minutes after the *Vindictive* anchored, the *Daffodil*, under Lieutenant H. G. Campbell, arrived. She had come in for a terrific fire from the enemy, and the din was almost unbearable. Campbell had been wounded at an early stage, but in spite of this he succeeded in putting the bows of the *Daffodil* against the *Vindictive* and then, wounded as he was, he calmly conducted the manœuvre, of pushing the *Vindictive* alongside, and then having completed that part of the job the men from the *Daffodil* leapt over the

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bows on board the *Vindictive* and from there on to the Mole.

As soon as the *Vindictive* had got close enough alongside, the brows or, as they are sometimes called, gangways, which had been specially constructed for the purpose, and also scaling ladders were put out and the storming parties led by Lieutenant-Commander Adams, dashed on to the Mole, followed by bluejackets and marines. In the meantime some of the men were employed placing the grappling anchors to hold the vessel alongside, whilst their comrades dashed along the Mole with bayonets fixed, attacking the enemy in all directions.

The *Iris*, in the meantime, under Commander Valentine Gibbs, was trying to get alongside ahead of the *Vindictive* and land more storming parties. Owing to the heavy swell Gibbs had the same difficulty as Carpenter and found he could not keep the ship in place. Two of his officers lost their lives in a gallant attempt to get the grappling anchors placed, and Gibbs, realising the attempt was hopeless, dropped alongside the *Vindictive*.

Carpenter's anxieties were centred on making sure the garrison on the Mole were kept fully occupied till the block-ships got in. The *Vindictive* came in for terrific shelling and so did the *Iris* and *Daffodil*, but each captain found time personally to cheer his men on.

The fight on the Mole was as fierce as any fight could be and was at its height, when suddenly, above all the exploding shells, was heard a bigger

Another Mole—Zeebrugge, 1918

and mightier explosion than ever and a blinding flash shot up in the skies. The viaduct had gone. A tremendous cheer went up in the *Vindictive* and the wounded cheered the loudest.

Submarine C 3, under Lieutenant R. D. Sandford, had entered the harbour, and by the light of star shells had steered straight for the viaduct. The Germans had seen the submarine, but left her unmolested, no doubt thinking she would come to a bad end against the Mole. They had no idea of what Sandford was up to—but he knew—going at full speed, he wedged his submarine under the viaduct, then placing his crew in their boat, he lit the fuses. Their little boat was immediately fired on by the Germans, and Sandford and two of his crew were wounded, but they bravely hung on till picked up by another boat.

We must now turn back to the *Vindictive*. As soon as the viaduct blew up, Carpenter was looking for the blocking ships to appear as punctually as he had done. He sent up star shells from the stern of the *Vindictive* to show them the way in. At 12.20 (the time arranged) the first block-ship, *Thetis*, under Commander R. S. Sneyd, was seen passing the end of the Mole, followed by the *Intrepid*—Lieutenant Stuart Bonham Carter, and the *Iphigenia*—Lieutenant E. W. Billyard Leake. Each ship as it entered was subjected to severe bombardment to which they replied as best they could with the few men they had to man their guns. The sight of these ships entering the harbour sent another cheer through the hard-trying

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crew of the *Vindictive* ; Carpenter on his visits to the decks found all his men, whether wounded or not, cheerfully enduring what can only have been a perfect inferno. Many of his crew were men of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, including Commander Hilton Young, who in spite of the loss of an arm bravely went on fighting. They felt that once the block-ships got in, their suffering and loss would not have been in vain. The *Thetis*, leading, ran into a net which fouled her propellers, but Sneyd thought more of the others than of himself, and at once signalled a warning to the other ships, and then calmly ordered his ship to be blown up as near the channel as he could get her. The crew got away in a boat which had been badly damaged. The *Intrepid* followed, firing her guns in return for what she was receiving. Bonham Carter ignored everything except his object, namely, to block the canal entrance. Full speed ahead he went, right on to the bank and then, pressing the switch, he too, blew his ship up, the crew getting into the boats and on to a raft as she sank. Next came the *Iphigenia*, steaming through smoke and the blinding flashes of the guns. Billyard Leake steered straight for the opposite bank to the *Intrepid*. As soon as he got into his position, he followed suit and blew his ship up, and away went the crew in the boats. What can one think or say of these men in the block-ships, steaming into an enemy's harbour, under intense shell fire, and then quietly sinking their ships? Carpenter in the *Vindictive* and the storming

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parties had done their part and the block-ships did theirs equally nobly. The engineer officers and men down in the stokeholds and engine-rooms knew that their chances of escape were small, yet they stayed down below till their captains ordered them up.

Now, in open boats in an enemy harbour, bristling with guns, their position did not seem much improved. But every detail that could be thought of had been arranged for, and two very gallant officers of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, Lieutenant Percy T. Deane and Lieutenant H. A. Littleton, took their little motor-launches (Nos. 282 and 526) straight into the harbour, right amidst the shells, and dodging the obstructions as best they could, went to the rescue of the men in the boats. The destroyers* in the meantime had been lying close off the harbour ready to attack any enemy ships that attempted to escape and also to pick up any of our own boats that came out from the block-ships. One of the destroyers, the *North Star* (Captain, Lieutenant-Commander K. C. Helyar) enveloped in smoke, found herself actually inside the Mole. Helyar at once turned to get out, under a perfect downpour of shell. In the meantime, he fired his torpedoes at the enemy craft lying inside the harbour. In trying to get out the *North Star* received such terrible injuries that she became completely crippled.

Another destroyer, the *Phoebe*, commanded by

* These belonged to Keyes's fleet and must not be confused with the Harwich destroyers.

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Lieutenant H. E. Gore Langton, was close at hand, and he, without a moment's hesitation, dashed in under heavy fire and attempted to rescue the *North Star*. Under the glare of the searchlights and with the enemy firing with greater fury than ever, he calmly took her in tow, trying to conceal his movements as best he could with a smoke screen. The tow partly gave way, but neither Gore Langton nor Helyar were men to give in easily. With the most desperate courage and under a heavy fire, Gore Langton attempted again and again either to get the *North Star* in tow or else, by pressing his bows against her, to push her out of the harbour or in some way or another save her from becoming a prize of the enemy. He tried his utmost for nearly an hour, by which time the *North Star* was so badly damaged that she had to be abandoned.

We must now go back again to the *Vindictive*, our pivot ship. Carpenter knew that when the blockships were in place, his task was done and he should retire. His ship was battered, especially in the upper works, nearly all the guns were out of action, and dead and wounded were lying all over the decks. At 12.50 he accordingly gave the order to retire: according to plan this should have been made by blowing the syrens, but both of the *Vindictive's* syrens had been destroyed by gunfire and so the retirement signal, by Carpenter's orders, was made from the *Daffodil*. The storming parties, such as remained alive or were not prisoners, started to scramble back to the

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Vindictive bringing the wounded with them. Even when it was reported to Carpenter that all the men were off the Mole, he was reluctant to shove off till he had made certain. Shells were still bursting on board, he himself was wounded, his First Lieutenant (Lieutenant Commander Rosoman) had been shot through both legs and his Quartermaster had his arm shattered, and there were numerous other casualties : yet he hesitated to run the least chance of leaving any of his men behind, and accordingly lingered a few minutes more.

At 1.10, over an hour since the *Vindictive* went alongside the Mole, Carpenter gave the final order to retire and the *Daffodil* started to tow the *Vindictive* off. The tow parted almost at once, so Carpenter made a smoke screen and at once went full speed ahead, and with his ship torn and battered, headed towards Dover.

But what of the *Iris* ? As she shoved off she came in for another deluge of shell, and the gallant Valentine Gibbs was mortally wounded. Her bridge was set on fire, and her casualties amounted to 8 officers and 69 men killed with 3 officers and 102 men wounded.

What of Keyes ? With his flag in the *Warwick* (Commander V. L. A. Campbell) he was here, there and everywhere. He trusted his officers and men ; he had no cause to interfere, and they in their turn knew that as long as Keyes was near them, all would be well. After the block-ships had proceeded into harbour, he closed the Mole and had a peep inside, to make sure the work had been

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well and truly done. Satisfied about that, he then closed the *Vindictive* to make sure she would get off all right. That done, he just lingered to make sure all the small craft were away, then dashing after the vessels returning to Dover he ran up alongside the *Vindictive* and made the signal, "Well done, *Vindictive*." What more to say? The crews cheered, they were relieved their Admiral was alive, and the battered *Vindictive*, the *Daffodil* and the *Iris*, as they steamed into Dover harbour, received the cheers of England. Exultation passed through the Empire; Keyes, as in the days of old, was knighted, Victoria Crosses were awarded to both the living and the dead—they all deserved them and none more so than Carpenter.

St. George's Day, 1918, will ever live in the annals of the British Navy, and indeed of England. Nearly 800 officers and men were killed or wounded in this brilliant episode undertaken by everything and everybody representative of the King's Sea Forces—the Royal Navy, the Merchant Service, the Royal Naval Reserve, the Royal Naval Fleet Reserve, the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, the Royal Naval Air Force and "per mare, per terram" the Royal Marines.

It is hard to compare the conditions of fighting in modern times with those of the olden days. Sufficient to say that as at Teneriffe, the officers and men were inspired with the Spirit of NELSON.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

COPY OF EXTRACT FROM THE COURT MINUTES OF THE EAST INDIA COMPANY.

Dated 20th December, 1715.

Sir Robert Child representing That in pursuance of the Order of this Court, The Committee of The Treasury had caused a Jewell to be made for Captain Martin, which was now laid before the Court, and appeared to be this Companyes Arms finely enamell'd, and emblazon'd in the proper colours, with the Supporters all set round with Diamonds, in Gold, And on the back of it was the following inscription :

" The English United East India Company rewarded
" Capt. Matthew Martin, Commander of The Ship
" *Marlborough*, with this Jewell and one Thousand Pounds
" Sterling, for defending his Ship in India three days
" successively against three French Ships of War, and
" bringing her safe to Fort St. George. Anno 1712."

AND Capt. Martin being called into Court, Sir Robert Child presented him therewith.

Court Book, April 1714-April 1716. Vol. 46, p. 532.

APPENDIX II

A MEMORANDUM ISSUED BY ADMIRAL VISCOUNT EXMOUTH (CAPTAIN PELLEW), AFTER HIS CAPTURE OF ALGIERS

*Queen Charlotte,
Algiers Bay.
August 30th, 1816.*

GENERAL MEMORANDUM

"The Commander-in-Chief is happy to inform the fleet of the final termination of their strenuous exertions, by the signature of peace, confirmed under a salute of twenty-one guns, on the following conditions, dictated by His Royal Highness the Prince Regent of England.

- "I. The abolition of Christian slavery for ever.
 - "II. The delivery to my flag of all slaves in the dominions of the Dey, to whatever nation they may belong, at noon to-morrow.
 - "III. To deliver also to my flag, all money received by him for the redemption of slaves since the commencement of this year—at noon also to-morrow.
 - "IV. Reparation has been made to the British Consul for all losses he has sustained in consequence of his confinement.
 - "V. The Dey has made a public apology, in presence of his ministers and officers, and begged pardon of the Consul, in terms dictated by the Captain of the *Queen Charlotte*.
- "The Commander-in-Chief takes this opportunity of again returning his public thanks to the Admirals, Captains, Officers, Seamen, Marines, Royal Sappers and Miners, Royal Marine Artillery, and the Royal Rocket Corps, for the noble support he has received from them throughout the whole of this

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arduous service ; and he is pleased to direct, that on Sunday next a public thanksgiving shall be offered up to Almighty God, for the signal interposition of His Divine Providence during the conflict which took place on the 27th, between His Majesty's fleet, and the ferocious enemies of mankind.

" It is requested that this memorandum may be read to the ship's company.

" To the Admirals, Captains, Officers, Seamen, Marines, Royal Sappers and Miners, Royal Marine Artillery, and the Royal Rocket Corps." •

APPENDIX III

THE OFFICERS' OPINION OF THE VICTORY AT ALGIERS

The officers of the squadron presented to their commander a magnificent piece of plate, of 1,400 guineas value, representing the Mole of Algiers, with its fortifications. The subscription exceeded the cost; and the surplus was paid to the Naval Charitable Society, of which Lord Exmouth was a vice-president.

The plate bore the following most flattering inscription :—

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
EDWARD, VISCOUNT AND BARON EXMOUTH,
and a Baronet,
Knight Grand Cross of the Most Honourable Military
Order of the Bath,

Of the Royal and Distinguished Order of
Charles the Third of Spain,
Of the Royal Sicilian Order of St. Ferdinand and
of Merit,

Knight of the Royal Sardinian Supreme Order
of the Annunciation,
Knight Grand Cross of the Royal Sardinian Order
of St. Lazarus and St. Maurice,

And of the Royal Military Order of William of
the Netherlands,

This Tribute of Admiration and Esteem
Is most respectfully presented by

THE REAR-ADMIRAL, CAPTAINS, AND
COMMANDERS,

Who had the honour to serve under him
at the memorable VICTORY gained at ALGIERS
on the 27th of August, 1816,

Where, by the Judgement, Valour, and
Decision of their distinguished Chief,
Aided by his Brilliant Example,

The GREAT CAUSE OF CHRISTIAN FREEDOM
was bravely Fought, and
NOBLY ACCOMPLISHED.

APPENDIX IV

BATTLE OF ALGIERS—LORD EXMOUTH'S DESPATCH

Queen Charlotte,
Algiers Bay.
28th August, 1816.

Sir,

In all the vicissitudes of a long life of public service, no circumstance has ever produced on my mind, such impressions of gratitude and joy as the event of yesterday. To have been one of the humble instruments in the hands of Divine Providence for bringing to reason a ferocious Government, and destroying for ever the insufferable and horrid system of Christian Slavery, can never cease to be a source of delight and heartfelt comfort to every individual happy enough to be employed in it. I may hope to be permitted, under such impressions, to offer my sincere congratulations to Their Lordships on the complete success which attended the gallant efforts of His Majesty's Fleet in their attack upon Algiers of yesterday, and the happy result produced from it on this day, by the signature of peace.

Thus has a provoked war of two days' existence been attended by a complete victory, and closed by a renewed peace for England, and her ally, the King of the Netherlands, on conditions dictated by the firmness and wisdom of His Majesty's Government, and commanded by the vigour of their measures.

My thanks are justly due for the honour and confidence His Majesty's Ministers have been pleased to repose on my zeal on this highly important occasion. The means were by them made adequate to my own wishes, and the rapidity of their measures speaks for itself. Not more than a hundred days since, I left Algiers with the British Fleet, unsuspecting and ignorant of the atrocities which had been committed at Bona. The fleet, on its arrival in England, was necessarily disbanded, and another with proportionate resources, created and equipped; and although impeded in its progress by calms

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and adverse winds, it has poured the vengeance of an insulted nation, in chastising the cruelties of a ferocious Government, with a promptitude beyond example, and highly honourable to the national character, eager to resent oppression or cruelty, wherever practised upon those under its protection.

Would to God that in the attainment of this object I had not deeply to lament the severe loss of so many gallant officers and men. They have profusely bled in a contest which has been peculiarly marked by proofs of such devoted heroism, as would rouse every noble feeling, did I dare to indulge in relating them.

The battle was fairly at issue between a handful of Britons, in the noble cause of Christianity, and a horde of fanatics, assembled round their city, and enclosed within its fortifications, to obey the dictates of their Despot.

The cause of God and humanity prevailed ; and so devoted was every creature in the fleet, that even British women served at the same guns with their husbands, and during a contest of many hours, never shrank from danger, but animated all around them.

If ever it can be permitted to an officer to depart from the usual forms of naval correspondence on any occasions, I trust I shall find in the indulgence of my superiors, and of my Country, excuses for having ventured thus to intrude my own sentiments ; and I confide myself to their liberality.

Their Lordships will have been already informed by His Majesty's sloop *Jasper*, of my proceedings up to the 14th inst., on which day I broke ground from Gibraltar, after a vexatious detention by a foul wind of four days.

The fleet, complete in all its points, with the addition of five gunboats fitted at Gibraltar, departed in the highest spirits, and with the most favourable prospect of reaching the port of their destination in three days ; but an adverse wind destroyed the expectation of an early arrival, which was the more anxiously looked for by myself, in consequence of hearing, the day I sailed from Gibraltar, that a large army had been assembled and that very considerable additional works were being thrown up, not only on both flanks of the city, but also immediately about the entrance of the Mole. From this, I was apprehensive that my intention of making that point my principal object of attack had been discovered to the Dey, by the same means he had heard of the expedition. This intelligence was on the following night greatly confirmed by the *Prometheus*, which I had despatched to Algiers some time before, to endeavour to get away the Consul. • Captain Dashwood had with

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difficulty succeeded in bringing away, disguised in midshipman's uniform, his wife and daughter, leaving a boat to bring off their infant child, coming down in a basket with the surgeon, who thought he had composed it; but it unhappily cried in the gateway, and in consequence, the surgeon, three midshipmen, and in all, eighteen persons, were seized, and confined as slaves in the usual dungeons. The child was sent off next morning by the Dey, and as a solitary instance of his humanity, it ought to be recorded by me.

Captain Dashwood further confirmed that about 40,000 men had been brought down from the interior, and all the Janizaries called in from distant garrisons; and that they were indefatigably employed on the batteries, gun-boats, etc., and everywhere strengthening their defences.

The Dey informed Captain Dashwood, he knew perfectly well the armament was destined for Algiers and asked him if it was true. He replied, if he had such information, he knew as much as he did, and probably from the same source, the public prints.

The ships were all in port, and between forty and fifty gun and mortarboats ready, with several more in forward repair. The Dey had closely confined the consul, and refused either to give him up, or to promise his personal safety; nor would he hear a word respecting the officers and men seized in the boat of the *Prometheus*.

From the continuance of adverse winds and calms, the land to the westward of Algiers was not made before the 26th, and next morning, at daybreak, the fleet was advanced in sight of the city, though not so near as I had intended. As the ships were becalmed, I embraced this opportunity of despatching a boat, under cover of the *Severn* with a flag of truce, and the demands I had to make in the name of his Royal Highness the Prince Regent on the Dey of Algiers, (of which the accompanying are copies) directing the officer to wait two or three hours for the Dey's answer, at which time, if no reply was sent, he was to return to the flagship. He was met near the Mole by the captain of the port, who, on being told that the answer was expected in one hour, replied that it was impossible. The officer then said he would wait two or three hours. He then observed two hours was quite sufficient.

The fleet at this time, by the springing up of the sea breeze, had reached the Bay, and were preparing the boats and flotilla for service, until near two o'clock, when, observing my officer returning with the signal flying that no answer had been

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received, after a delay of upwards of three hours, I instantly made the signal to know if the ships were all ready ; which, being answered in the affirmative, the *Queen Charlotte* bore up followed by the fleet, for their appointed stations. The flag leading in the prescribed order, was anchored in the entrance of the Mole, at about fifty yards distance. At this moment not a gun had been fired, and I began to suspect a full compliance with the terms which had been so many hours in their hands. At this period of profound silence, a shot was fired at us from the Mole, and two at the ships to the northward, then following. This was promptly returned by the *Queen Charlotte*, which was then lashing to the mainmast of a brig fast to the shore in the mouth of the Mole, and which we had steered for as a guide to our position.

Thus commenced a fire, as animated and well-supported as I believe was ever witnessed, from a quarter before three until nine without intermission, and which did not cease altogether till half-past eleven.

The ships immediately following me were admirably and coolly taking their stations, with a precision even beyond my most sanguine hope ; and never did the British flag receive, on any occasion, more zealous and honourable support.

To look farther on the line then immediately around me, was perfectly impossible ; but so well grounded was my confidence in the gallant officers I had the honour to command, that my mind was left perfectly free to attend to other objects ; and I knew them in their stations only by the destructive effect of their fire upon the walls and batteries to which they were opposed.

I had about this time the satisfaction of seeing Vice-Admiral Von Capellau's flag in the station I had assigned to him, and soon after, at intervals, the remainder of his frigates, keeping up a well-supported fire on the flanking batteries he had offered to cover us from ; as it had not been in my power, for want of room, to bring him in the front of the Mole.

About sunset I received a message from Rear-Admiral Milne, by Captain Powell, a friend of Captain Brace, conveying to me the severe loss the *Impregnable* was sustaining, having then 150 killed and wounded, and requesting I would, if possible, send him a frigate to divert some of the fire he was under.

The *Glasgow*, near me, immediately weighed, but the wind had been driven away by the cannonade, and she was obliged to anchor again, having obtained rather a better position than before.

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I had at this time sent orders to the explosion-vessel (under charge of Lieut. Fleming, and Mr. Parker) by Captain Reade, of the engineers, to bring her into the Mole, but the Rear-Admiral having thought she might do him essential service if exploded under the battery in his front, I desired Captain Powell to carry my orders to this vessel to that effect, where he staid till it was executed. I desired also the Rear-Admiral might be informed that many of the ships being now in flames, and the destruction of the whole certain, I considered I had executed the most important part of my instructions, and should make every preparation for withdrawing the ships; and desired he would do so as soon as possible with his division.

There were awful moments during this conflict which I cannot attempt to describe, occasioned by firing the ships so near us. I had long resisted the eager entreaties of several around me to make the attempt upon the outer frigate, distant about a hundred yards, which at length I gave in to; and Major Gossett by my side, who had been eager to land his corps of miners, pressed me most anxiously for permission to accompany Lieutenant Richards, in the ship's barge. The frigate was instantly boarded, and in ten minutes was in a perfect blaze. A gallant young midshipman, in rocket boat No. 8, although forbidden, was led by his ardent spirit to follow in support of the barge; in which attempt he was desperately wounded, his brother officer killed, and nine of his crew. The barge, by rowing more rapidly, had suffered less, and lost but two.

The enemy's batteries around my division were about ten o'clock silenced, and in a state of perfect ruin and dilapidation; and the fire of the ship was reserved as much as possible, to save powder, and reply to a few guns now and then bearing upon us; although a fort on the upper angle of the city, on which our guns could not be brought to bear, continued to annoy the ships by shot and shells, during the whole time.

Providence at this interval gave to my anxious wishes the usual land-wind common in this bay. We were all hands employed warping and towing off, and by the help of the light air, the whole fleet were under sail, and came to an anchor out of reach of shot and shells about two in the morning, after twelve hours' incessant labour.

The flotilla of mortar, gun, and rocket-boats, under the direction of their respective artillery officers, shared to the full extent of their power in the honours of this day, and performed good service. It was by their fire that all the ships in the port,

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with the exception of the outer frigate, were in flames, which extended rapidly over the whole arsenal, storehouses, and gun-boats, exhibiting a spectacle of awful grandeur and interest no pen can describe.

The sloops of war, which had been appropriated to aid and assist the ships of line, and prepare for their retreat, performed not only this duty well, but embraced every opportunity of firing through the intervals, and were constantly in motion.

The shells from the bombs were admirably well thrown by the Royal Marine Artillery ; and although thrown directly across and over us, not an accident that I know of occurred to any ship.

The whole was conducted in perfect silence, and such a thing as a cheer I never heard in any part of the line ; and that the guns were well worked and directed, will be seen for many years to come, and remembered by these barbarians for ever.

The conducting this ship to her station by the masters of the fleet and ship, excited the praise of all. The former has been my companion in arms for more than twenty years.

Having thus detailed, though but imperfectly, the progress of this short service, I venture to hope that the humble and devoted services of myself, the officers, and men of every description I have the honour to command, will be viewed by His Royal Highness the Prince Regent with his accustomed grace. The approbation of our services by our Sovereign and the good opinion of our Country, will, I venture to affirm, be received by us all with the highest satisfaction.

If I attempt to name to Their Lordships the numerous officers who in such a conflict have at different periods been more conspicuous than their companions, I shall do injustice to many ; and I trust there is no officer in the fleet under my command, who will doubt the grateful feelings I shall ever cherish for their unbounded support. Not an officer or man confined his exertions within the precise limits of his own duty ; all were eager to attempt services which I found more difficult to restrain than excite, and nowhere was this feeling more conspicuous than in my own Captain, and those officers immediately about my person.

My gratitude and thanks are due to all, and I trust they will believe that the recollections of their services will never cease but with my life. In no instance have I ever seen more energy and zeal, from the smallest midshipman to the highest rank. All seemed animated with one soul, and which I shall with

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delight bear testimony to their Lordships, whenever that testimony can be useful.

I have confided this despatch to Rear-Admiral Milne, my second in command, from whom I have received, during the whole service entrusted to me, the most cordial and honourable support. He is perfectly informed of every transaction of the fleet from the earliest period of my command, and is fully competent to give their Lordships satisfaction on any points which I may have overlooked, or have not time to state. I trust I have obtained from him his esteem and regard, and I regret I had not sooner been known to him.

The necessary papers, together with the defects of the ships, and the returns of killed and wounded, accompany this despatch, and I am happy to say Captains Ekins and Coode are doing well, and also the whole of the wounded.

By accounts from the shore, I understand the enemy's loss in killed and wounded is between six and seven thousand men.

In recommending my officers and fleet to their Lordships' protection and favour,

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your most obedient humble servant,
EXMOUTH.

APPENDIX V

COPY OF LORD EXMOUTH'S LETTER TO THE DEY OF ALGIERS

H.B.M. Ship *Queen Charlotte*,
Algiers Bay.
28th August, 1816.

Sir,

For your atrocities at Bona on defenceless Christians, and your unbecoming disregard to the demands I made yesterday, in the name of the Prince Regent of England, the fleet under my orders has given you a signal chastisement, by the total destruction of your navy, store-houses, and arsenal, with half your batteries.

As England does not war for the destruction of cities, I am unwilling to visit your personal cruelties upon the unoffending inhabitants of the country, and I therefore offer you the same terms of peace which I conveyed to you yesterday in my Sovereign's name. Without the acceptance of these terms, you can have no peace with England.

If you receive this offer as you ought, you will fire three guns ; and I shall consider your not making this signal as a refusal, and shall renew my operations at my convenience.

I offer you the above terms, provided neither the British Consul, nor the officers and men so wickedly seized by you from the boats of a British ship of war, have met with any cruel treatment ; or any of the Christian slaves in your power ; and I repeat my demand that the Consul, the officers, and men, may be sent off to me, conformably to ancient treaties.

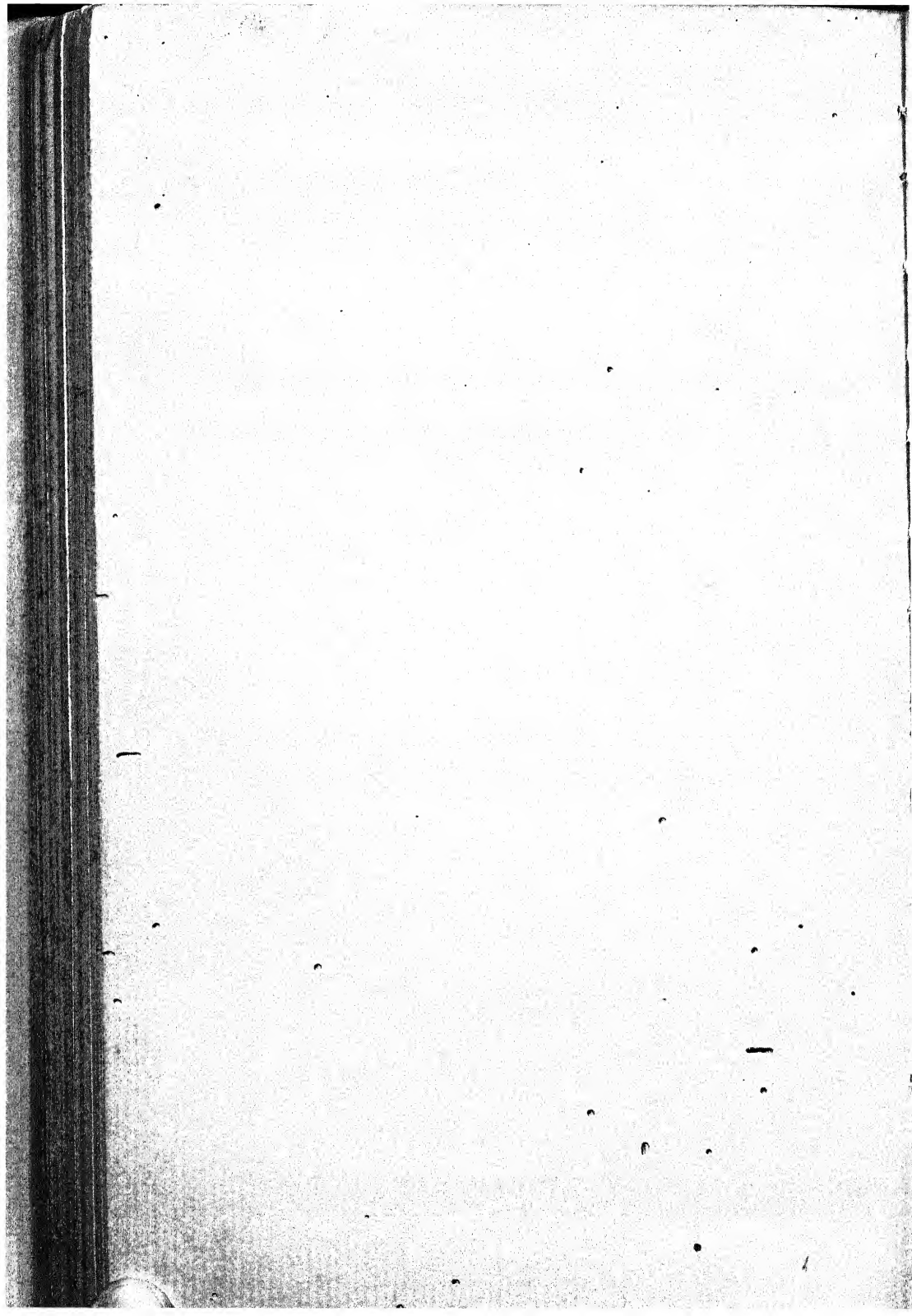
I have the honour to be, etc.

EXMOUTH.

His Highness the Dey of Algiers,

AUTHORITIES CONSULTED

- "Royal Navy." CLOWES.
"Battles of the British Navy." ALLEN.
"Naval History of Great Britain." JAMES.
"History of the British Navy." YONGE.
"Short History of the Royal Navy." HANNAY.
"Official Naval History of the War." CORBETT and NEWBOLT.
"History of the Royal Navy." NICHOLAS.
"A Naval History of the War." NEWBOLT.
"The Empire at War." LUCAS.
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